

New York Saturday Journal

A HOME WEEKLY FOR WINTER NIGHTS AND SUMMER DAYS.

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Vol. VI.

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William Adams,
David Adams,

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 20, 1875.

TERMS IN ADVANCE

One copy, four months, \$1.00.
One copy, one year, . . . 5.00.
Two copies, one year, . . . 5.00.

No. 297.

ONLY A WOMAN'S GLOVE.

BY HENRI MONTCAIM.

Only a woman's glove!
I take it up with tender reverence,
And from it steals a perfume as of myrrh,
Vailing my senses like some sweet incense,
Bringing back days that were,
And memories of her
Unto whose hand it clove.
Only a woman's glove!
Long years ago she threw it down for me
In mimic challenge, as the knights we've read
Flung down their gauntlets: "Dare to love," said
she.
"Your blood be on your head."
"Better my love slay me," I said,
"Than that I slay my love."
Only a woman's love!
And yet, false though she was, methinks I'd
choose,
If I might possibly turn back life's page,
Even knowing that I should but love to lose—
Again to take the gage,
Again the unequal war to wage,
And dare to love.
Oh, little glove,
So desolate, perhaps you understand
How near alike are we two, inasmuch
As we have each once touched the same fair
hand.
And never more shall touch.
Maybe your very emptiness is such
As my heart's, robbed of love.
Oh, buried love!
After these years what matters it that she
Did did my heart aside in wantonness
Like as her glove? Though she was false to me
Yet I still care
With longing, loving, lingering tenderness,
Only her glove.

Pacific Pete, The Prince of the Revolver.

BY JOS. E. BADGER, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "OLD BULL'S-EYE," "YELLOW-
STONE JACK," ETC.

CHAPTER V.

A DISAGREEABLE VISITOR.

THE man who had so suddenly drawn Edna Brand from her position upon the rock-shelf clutched her tightly by the arm and dragged rather than led her through the tangled undergrowth and scattered boulders, ever and anon casting a swift glance backward as though anticipating pursuit. Nor did he slacken his pace until they were full half a mile distant from the scene of conflict.
"Now then, girl, explain," he said, in a harsh tone, as he paused beside an uprooted tree. "What were you doing on that shelf?—who were those men?—tell me everything that happened—quick!"
As soon as she had recovered sufficient breath to speak coherently, Edna obeyed, telling how she had lost her reckoning, the meeting with Mark Austin, his politeness and service as guide, and then the struggle with the bear.
"He was safe and beyond that frightful brute's reach, and might have easily escaped, father. But no—he saved my life—perhaps at the sacrifice of his own. And we—fled without—Father, let's go back," added Edna, brokenly.
"Go back—and for what?"
"He may be dead—or perhaps badly hurt, and our assistance might save his life. How can we do less and still call ourselves human beings! Only for him, I would not be alive now!" she passionately exclaimed.
"Bah! don't be foolish. If he was hurt, his comrade can care for him. You never spoke of him—the ragged, gray-headed fellow. You ain't hiding anything from me?" he demanded, suspiciously.
"There was no one with us. I did not notice him until after you called. He must have been down in the hollow."
"Come—you are rested enough. I'll be afraid to take my eyes off you, any more, unless you give over this uncomfortable habit of making new acquaintances at every turn. You know that I don't like it—that I have forbidden your speaking to or answering a stranger. I have my reasons for this—good ones, too, and you must obey. I don't like to be too harsh with you, but—you understand?"
Edna bowed her head, but did not speak. It was evident that she did understand, that this rude speech was not the first one on the same subject. She made no further objection, but followed her father's lead with a listless, heavy tread, very different from the glad, elastic step that carried her so easily along the winding trail as she listened to the cheery, manly voice of the young hunter.
Eli Brand was a tall, well-preserved man, whose age could not have been less than fifty years. His features were good, his hair and beard still luxuriant, black as night, unmarked by a single silver thread. He was dressed in the usual mining garb: soft felt hat, flannel shirt, heavy trousers and cowhide boots. The belt at his waist supported a knife and brace of revolvers; in addition he carried a heavy rifle.
Though, in answer to a former question of Edna's, Brand had declared that this was his first visit in the neighborhood, the perfect knowledge he now betrayed of the lay of the ground flatly contradicted his assertion. A stranger could not have followed that intricate trail without once pausing to study out his position. But Edna did not seem to notice this fact. Her brain was busy with far different thoughts.
"Here we are at last—thank goodness!" at length exclaimed Eli Brand, as they entered the little valley described by Edna. "And



"Gentlemen, order! Put up your weapons—I command it—I, Pacific Pete's sister!"

I'm hungry as a wolf, too. You make haste and cook—Ha!"
The figure of a man suddenly made his appearance at the door of the rude brush shanty. That he had been making himself at home was evident. A cigar was between his bearded lips; in one hand he held—strange sight in that wild, half-civilized region—a beautiful guitar, and idly swept the strings as he gazed upon the couple.
His rich, fantastic garb—that of a native Californian, closely resembling that of the rich rancheros of the far South—harmonized well with his tall, athletic figure, his dark, fierce beauty. All in all he was the beau ideal of a Spanish cavalier.
As Eli Brand flung forward his rifle, the intruder frowned heavily, and raising one hand, he sounded a peculiar, sharp whistle through his fingers. The signal was not disregarded. Lowering his weapon, Brand advanced, though there was an ugly glitter in his black eyes that did not betray much love for the intruder.
"You let the girl alone, Juan Cabrera," suddenly said Eli Brand, as the Californian addressed Edna in a flowery, not to say stilted style. "Your business is with me, I take it. Edna, go get dinner—make haste, too."
"Yes, my business is with you," retorted Cabrera, as Edna entered the hut, and though slightly accented, he spoke unusually correct English for one of his race.
"Come down by the spring, then. We needn't let her know everything. You come from—"
"El capitán—yes. He sent you this," briefly replied the Californian, producing a small envelope from his breast.
Brand's face darkened as he perused the few lines which the note contained, and a bitter curse broke from his lips. But then, catching the keen eye of Cabrera fixed upon him, he smothered his rage as well as he could.
"You know what this note contains?" he said at length, and his voice, though low, trembled with anger.
"I have an idea," was the cool reply.
"But I know what my instructions are."
"Well—why the deuce don't you spit 'em out, then?"
"Bah! you heretics—you Americans are so hot," drawled Cabrera, deftly rolling up a cigar, then spending several minutes in striking a light with flint, steel and tinder. "So! now we can talk comfortably. Well—I come from the captain."
"Say it once more and then sing it," growled Brand.
"Fetch me the guitar, yonder, and I will. But a truce to jesting. If I mistake not, in the note which you are treating so rudely, and which was written by our chief, Captain Vincente Barada, you have orders to accept what

I am about to tell you as law—a law which you must obey in every particular, under penalty of— But you know the doom that awaits traitors. Am I correct?"
"Go on," was the sullen reply. "But don't push me too far—keep your sneers to yourself, or I'll lend you the blade of my knife."
"I thought you preferred the rifle—*guarda te!* Drop that—you see I don't play with a snake unless I have an antidote against its fangs."
Eli Brand sunk back and slowly returned the knife to his belt, cowed by the black muzzle of the revolver that touched his temple. Laughing lightly, Cabrera continued, but he still held the pistol ready for use.
"Speaking of using a rifle—that reminds me. It seems that some one has an interest in raking up that old affair. At least there have been inquiries concerning the party. I merely mention it to put you on your guard—the act of a friend, is it not? But there; to business.
"You came here in obedience to our master's will. He bade you wait here until he sent you further directions. It is for this that I am here now. Are you ready to receive them—and to obey?"
"You know that I must—curse you!" snarled Brand, chafing like a cornered wolf, yearning yet afraid to bite the hand that punished him.
"I wouldn't advise you to let the captain hear you speak in that tone. He believes in prevention rather than cure, and you know what our laws say in regard to traitors."
"Enough of this," said Brand, in a tone almost stifled by passion. "If you have anything to tell me, spit it out at once and in as few words as possible. Don't push me too far—don't you do it! Deliver your message and then leave—before I lose all control of myself—or I'll tear your black heart out for a gag to stop your sneering tongue!"
"Bah! am I a child? But as you will. Listen—and remember that your master speaks through me."
"You are to leave this and go down to Windy Gap; while there you can play any part you choose—a padre, if you will. Only you must be ready to act whenever called upon. The captain sends you this bag, for expenses," and Cabrera produced a heavy skin bag of gold-dust; "when that is gone, you will be provided with more. But bear this in mind: you are never to recognize one of our band, no matter what may be the circumstances under which you meet them, unless they first give you the signal. Understand?"
"Yes; what you say, but not what I am to do."
"You will learn in good time. One thing I can tell you now. You will find a man in Windy Gap, known as Pacific Pete. Keep an eye upon him, watch—"

"Hellow, strangers—how d'y'?" Glad to see ye—am fer a fact—sugar in a rag, yas!"
The words, uttered in a lazy, drawling tone, came from a little distance down the stream, and caused the two men to spring erect, with looks of surprise and confusion.
"Easy, that—kinder easy!" cried the intruder, in a sharper tone, as he flung his rifle-muzzle forward. "Winegar in a hornspoon! You don't shoot all your friends every time they drop in on ye, kinder social like, do ye?"
"Who are you—what do you want, anyhow? What right have you to sneak up on us in this manner?" demanded Juan Cabrera, his black eyes glittering.
"You couldn't possibly ax a dozen or so more questions, could ye? I like to take my things all in a heap. Hellow! looks like your friend thar was sick; got the cramps, mebbe—'orful gripin', they be!"
"He's subject to such attacks; don't notice him, and he'll come out all right," quickly replied Cabrera, glancing at the ghastly face and trembling figure of Eli Brand. "He sees snakes, sometimes—you understand?"
"Don't I? Wish I had a dollar fer every bootful of the pizon critters I've had," and the intruder chuckled grimly.
"Who are you?" gasped Brand, vainly striving to still his nerves.
"Jes' so. Sorry I ain't got no keerd—giv' the last to a Ute squaw, yest'day. Didn't spect to meet perite comp'ny so soon, ye see. But my name's Old Business. I'm a travellin' sign for a boss tailor-shop in St. Louey. Hyar, gentlemen, you see the latest style; jest out—"
"They turned you loose before you were cured, I should say," sneered Cabrera.
"You'll be turned off tight—round the neck. They say it's sudden death fer a feller to be ketcht now, a-borrowin' a feller's dust when he's asleep. Thar was a time when he stood a chaine o' gittin' off, even a'ter the noose w'round his neck. Hellow! you sick, too! Air must be drefful onhealthy in these parts."
"I'll be for you, if you talk too much in my presence. If you're wise, you'll take the hint. Brand," and he turned abruptly to the other, "you will not forget! Lose no time; pull up stakes and strike the new claim to-morrow. Remember."
"A good-lookin' galoot," observed Old Business, looking after Cabrera as he strode away. "But he won't die in his bed."
"What do you know of him?" asked Brand, with ill-concealed anxiety.
"Not much, either way. But, you see, he's got a pink wart on his nose. That's a sign he won't live long. Then he stepped out with his right foot to'most—a sure sign he ain't no better'n he orter be. You see how he holds his

head, on the right shoulder! That's a sign he'll war a hemp necktie, with the knot under his left year. I never knowed the signs to fail; he's meat for the vigilantes, sure!"
"Bah! you are not such a fool as you try to make out. And now, if you have no business with me, I'll not detain you any longer."
"A perlite way o' tellin' me to puckachee—thank ye. I'm lookin' fer a man called John R. Austin; that ain't your name?"
"No, it's not my name," snarled Brand.
"Never heard tell on him, neither, I reckon!"
At this moment, Edna stepped to the door of the shanty, and announced that dinner was ready.
"The best news I've hearn for a month. I kin eat—"
"Haden't you better wait until you're invited? Edna, what on earth—"
"Father, it's the gentleman! Oh, sir, was he hurt much? he wasn't killed?" faltered the maiden, her eyes sinking beneath the keen glance of Old Business.
"So—I thought I couldn't mistake that pretty face, though you did leave in a hurry, back thar. I jest caught a glimpse o' your face, but I knowed I'd know it ag'in. Oh, the young feller! He's all right—ain't hurt a bit. One arm chawed off, his head skelped, a' eye dug out—he'll be all right when we cut off his t'other leg, I reckon. Hellow! she's sick, too! Durn sech a kentry—more sick people then you kin shake a stick at! Git some water, quick, old man!"
Edna turned pale and would have fallen, only for the arms of Old Business, who raised her from the ground and carried her to the hut as though she had been an infant. Brand brought water, but it was not needed; and while he was gone, the old hunter took occasion to tell Edna the truth—that Mark, in all probability, would be upon his feet inside of a week.
Old Business evidently was bent upon obtaining a "square meal," and Brand's rather broad hints were quietly ignored or quaintly misinterpreted, until he finally accepted the situation, though with an ill grace. The unwelcome guest directed most of his remarks to Edna, and several times her artless replies caused Brand to frown deeply, until at length he burst forth:
"Look here, old man, enough's enough. You force yourself upon those who don't want your company, invite yourself to dinner, and make yourself as free with my things as though they belonged to yourself. I can swallow all that, but when you go to prying into our private affairs, asking all sorts of impudent questions—that's too much! You understand?"
"Father!" exclaimed Edna, flushing painfully.
"Thar, little one, don't bother on my a'count I know jest what's the matter, 'cause I've bin thar myself. It's the quittin' off too short. You must kinder taper off, like. This is the nannyoat; take a pull, fr'nd," coolly quoth Old Business, producing a rubber flask of whisky.
"Do you want to insult me?" snarled Brand, his face livid.
"Jest look at that now! Good whisky as ever saw daylight—an' he calls it a insult! I'm afraid you're in a bad way, stranger. Miss, I'm a rough old coon, but my blessin' won't hurt you none. God bless you for your kind words an' kinder looks! I won't fergit 'em this while. Some time mebbe you'll know me better. But let that pass. Your father don't 'pear to like me, so I reckon I'd better mosey."
"It'll be better for you," muttered Brand, almost choked with rage.
"You say you're better! Glad to hear it, fer thar's room fer powerful lots o' 'provement—thar is so!" said Old Business, as he stepped across the threshold.
Brand hastily drew a revolver and cocked it. At the sharp click, Old Business turned around, and lifted one hand.
The weapon dropped from Eli Brand's hand, and he sunk back, trembling like one in an ague fit. Then, with a quiet smile, Old Business strode swiftly down the valley.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GODDESS OF THE HORN OF PLENTY.
WINDY GAP was all agog. The long-haired, flannel-shirted miners were gathered in knots, in earnest conversation, composed for the most part of exclamations and sonorous oaths, interrupted at every other breath by a loud, dis cordant toot—toot—toot-toot!
A negro, black as ebony, of gigantic build, was parading the one crooked street, extracting a most horrible combination of diabolical sounds from a large ox-horn. His armor was a modification of that so unwillingly borne by Sancho Panza when his island-city was invaded; instead of tortoise-shell, the African was inside a hollow square of painted canvass. What the artist lacked in skill was more than made up by the brilliancy of his colors.
Upon each side was painted "THE GOLDEN HORN OF PLENTY! OPEN TO-NIGHT!"
Upon the front was represented a woman with flowing golden hair, dressed in scarlet, green and purple, supporting a huge yellow cornucopia, from the mouth of which was flowing a wonderful stream of golden coin. Kneeling at her feet were a number of red and blue-shirted miners, catching the glittering shower in their hats, stuffing their pockets full, while one stout fellow who had filled the skin of an ox with gold was literally crushed to death beneath his load of riches.
Upon the reverse side were represented a pair of dice, a pack of cards, a faro lay-out and a roulette wheel.

Across the way—nearly opposite the Hole in the Wall—the saloon where Big Tom Noxon met his match in the new pilgrim, Pacific Pete—a good sized slab building had been erected. Above the door was a transparency, bearing the legend—"THE GOLDEN HORN OF PLENTY. RUN BY PACIFIC PETE."

Our old friend Ginger Dick, in company with several others, including Big Tom, who still bore his right arm in a sling, were curiously regarding the building.

"We'll give 'em a red-hot house-warmin', I reckon," quoth Ginger, renewing his quid. "They say he's got it fixed up awful snipulous inside."

"Then that's the female woman, too—mebbe we'll git a fair squint at her!"

"You've got the dead wood on us thar," Ginger, cried Vinegar Sol, enviously. "You driv' her clear from Crooked Creek!"

"Yes, I did—an' what good 'd it do me? I couldn't git a sight for my pile, nohow. Didn't I stop the stage twice fer to git inside an' look all over fer my pipe, which was in my pocket, safe enough, all the time? An' didn't she jest set thar like a bump on a log, her face all kivered up with that darned contrabry black stuff? The most I could see was a pair o' eyes a shinin' through the kiverin' like coals o' fire."

"That was a dog gone swindle—durned if 'twasn't!"

"An' she got a foot, though," chimed in Limber Vic, the ex-circus actor. "Tain't bigger 'n my thumb. An' ankle—oh! git out—go 'way sugar, you've lost your taste! I was standin' right hyar when she got out, an' her dress kinder ketched on the step. That knocked me."

"Thar he comes now—reckon you'd better turn it up," hastily muttered Big Tom, as Pacific Pete emerged from the new building and passed over to the saloon.

"Gentlemen, you will drink with me," he said, in his soft, low voice. "I want you to drink success to my new venture."

Even if their wishes had not been identical, it is very doubtful whether any one of the party, reckless, devil-may-care fellows though they were, would have declined the invitation. They had not forgotten the lesson given Dutch Frank and Big Tom Noxon, and had learned a wholesome respect for the new citizen.

Little more than a week had elapsed since that memorable day, yet in that time Pacific Pete had clearly defined his position in Windy Gap, and was already acknowledged "boss of the town," tacitly, if not in open words.

He had built a two-story house of rough, unplanned boards, brought from Crooked Creek at an enormous cost, together with several wagon loads of boxed goods. The inside of the building had been completed by workmen who came by stage, and who departed when the work was done, with closed mouths that not even invitations to drink could open.

Then, as the climax, a closely veiled lady, dressed all in black, came by stage, and entered the house without anyone's succeeding in seeing her face or hearing her voice. Nor had she been seen since, though curious eyes had closely watched the house for hours at a stretch.

"You will drop in and see me to-night, gentlemen," said Pacific Pete, at parting. "You bet! I reckon we want a grab at them dollars that yaller-headed woman's a spillin'," grinned Ginger Dick.

The sun had scarcely sunk to rest behind the western horizon when the transparency was lighted up, and the gigantic negro stood at the open door of the Horn of Plenty. The rush was impetuous at first, but the sable guardian withstood the shock as a mighty rock does the sullen rush of the ocean's waves, and only admitted the miners one at a time.

"Plenty ob time, gemmen, plenty ob time. De big horn won't run yet for a hour. Marse gwine to make a speech first," said the African, showing his magnificent teeth.

The "amusement hall" was upon the first floor. After passing the negro the miners crossed a narrow vestibule, then pushed open a swinging door of green baize, and found themselves in the presence of Pacific Pete. Each man was cordially greeted, and it was truly wonderful how pat the gentlemanly proprietor had every one's name or *sobriquet*.

A word of greeting to each one, coupled with a cordial invitation to make themselves at home—with a motion toward a well-loaded table, covered with cold lunch and several huge decanters filled with amber-hued liquor. But the climax was when the sable waiter persistently refused the dust or coin proffered in payment.

"It's a free lay-out, boys," cried Ginger Dick. "Give the boss a little squeal, in token that we 'preciate it all!"

Pacific Pete bowed and smiled in recognition of the enthusiastic cheer, and then, in obedience to the call for a speech, he sprang lightly upon one of the green baize-covered tables.

"Order in the camp!" thundered Big Tom Noxon, who, ever since his memorable defeat, had been an enthusiastic follower of Pacific Pete. "Order—the boss is goin' to speak!"

"I'll not detain you long, gentlemen. After thanking you for your kind appreciation of my endeavors to please, I have half a dozen words to say about this outfit. You see it is a gambling-house. Of course, I've set it up in the expectation of making money—I'd be a fool if that wasn't my reason. But I'm going to act square with you. You'll find no brace game here while I run the machine. If fortune favors me, good enough! If not, I couldn't lose my dust among a better or truer-hearted crowd."

"That's worth three more, boys!" cried Ginger Dick, and three times three stentorian cheers were given in exchange for the compliment.

"One thing more, and I have done," said Pacific Pete, when the tumult gradually subsided. "I said that this outfit was to be run on the strict square. Yet, of course, some one is bound to lose. If any such person thinks he is wronged, all he has to do is to give the sign, step outside, and I'll be most happy to accommodate him in any manner. But I won't have any disturbances in this house while it belongs to me. The first man that tries to kick up a row, inside here, will go out that door, feet foremost, a candidate for a first-class funeral. I say this—Pacific Pete!"

"Another point, gentlemen. Sometimes it will happen that business elsewhere requires my attention. At such times my sister will be left in charge of this place, and I want it distinctly understood that whatever she says or does will be made good by me—in fact, you can just think of her as me, and govern yourselves accordingly. You understand? Good enough! Gentlemen, join me in a drink!"

While the miners were thus agreeably occupied, a side-door opened and three men, neatly dressed in black broadcloth, noiselessly entered and seated themselves at the different tables.

"Now gentlemen," said Pacific Pete, "amuse yourselves as you please. If you prefer playing the tables are now ready. I will drop in on you after a bit and see how the thing is working."

"Make your game, gentlemen," uttered one

of the dealers, in a clear metallic tone, as he gave his roulette wheel a turn.

That was sufficient. Gambling is an epidemic at the mines in any country, but no where was it more so than throughout California, after the first year or two, when "running a bank" was a shorter road to wealth than working the cradle and sluice.

And crowding thick around the tables, the golden stream was soon at full tide and ebb, now favoring the bank, now the player. The gentlemen in black were now reinforced by others, who acted as croupiers, the variety and number of the bets requiring one's constant attention.

As though in obedience to an inaudible signal, the attendants arose, turning toward the upper end of the room, bending their heads low. A quick buzz passed through the crowd as following with their eyes the direction, they saw a tall, magnificently dressed lady standing beside the dealer's chair at the one uncoupled faro table. After making a low, graceful courtesy, she seated herself in a chair, unlocked a drawer and produced a "lay-out," then, in a clear, musical tone:

"Make your game, gentlemen!"

The miners could not believe their ears. Was this radiant creature about to deal for them? The very idea made them gasp for breath.

"It's the angel wif the little foot an' glorious ankles!" at length muttered Limber Vic. "Who'll back me up?"

"Ginger Dick—you bet!" promptly affirmed that worthy. "I only wish I had a hull goldmine to fling in her lap—I do so!"

"Gentlemen, make your—" began the lady; but she never completed the sentence as her eye became fixed upon two new comers who had just passed through the swinging door.

One was tall, erect as a poplar, despite the silvery locks that hung to his shoulders, mingling with the heavy, patriarchal beard. The other, a young man, bore traces of a recent and severe illness. He leaned upon the strong arm of his comrade, like one whose strength had been overtaken. Yet his face was handsome—almost marvelously so, despite its pallor. The curling locks of chestnut, the drooping mustache, the large, languid eyes, the perfect form, rudely clad though it was; all made a picture well calculated to attract and fix the regards of a woman.

As the reader has doubtless surmised, the new comers were none other than Lufe Pike and Mark Austin.

"What a glorious creature!" broke almost unconsciously from the young miner's lips, and a bright flush mounted the cheek of the woman, as though she had overheard the words.

Nor was Mark's admiration misplaced. The lady dealer was indeed a glorious creature. She was tall and stately—just as one imagines a queen should look—her almost perfectly symmetrical figure, if anything a little too voluptuous; but when was that a fault in the eyes of man? Her dress, of rich crimson—almost wine color—silk faced and flounced with costly white lace, was well calculated to set off and display her charms. The low-cut bodice left her firm, magnificent bust only covered with flimsy, gauzy lace. Her snowy neck was surrounded with a circle of diamonds, flashing and scintillating like the eyes of a serpent.

Her wealth of hair, jet black and glossy as the raven's plumage, was coiled in a coronet at the back of her small, haughty head. Hers was a face that baffled description. One might speak of the marvelous eyes, so large, so lustrous, so melting; of the red, ripe lips; of the dimpled chin, the satin smooth cheeks, just flushed with the blush of the moss rose; of the even, pearly teeth; yet all this would give the reader but a faint, hazy idea of the glorious beauty that met Mark Austin's enthusiastic gaze.

The dark eyes, drooped beneath his ardent gaze, and the woman signaled to her attendant, whispering a few words in his ear. He placed a couple of chairs directly opposite the dealer's position, then advanced and politely invited the comrades to rest themselves.

Your cake's dough, Limber Vic," chuckled Ginger Dick, whose keen eyes had not overlooked this bit of play-act, nor the brief but admiring glance that was interchanged as Austin seated himself. "Gentlemen Mark has got the poll this time!"

"Thar's enough tho' fer two," muttered the gymnast; but there was an ugly glitter in his eye that betrayed evil thoughts.

"Make your game, gentlemen!" again sounded the clear mellow voice, and then came the soft sliding sound of the cards, the clink of gold pieces, or the dull clump as a heavy bag of dust was cast upon the turn of a card.

After a time the novelty wore off, and the miners had eyes only for their winnings or losses. Pike played with all the cool ardor—if the terms be not contradictory of a professional gambler. Not so Mark. He bet at random, and only removed his gaze from that peerless face when the rake of the croupier pushed a pile of gold toward him. For a wonderful "turn of luck" seemed to favor him. He won almost incessantly, until a large pile of gold lay before him. Yet the gold was not half so precious to him as the occasional glance from those marvelous eyes, or the soft blush that crossed the cheek, as the lady dealer noticed his ardent gaze.

One player—a huge, black browed Mexican—now made himself conspicuous, cursing his ill luck, and even going so far as to hint that Mark's good fortune might be easily explained by the bank, were it so inclined. The lady finished the deal, then turned abruptly to the gambler.

"My friend, of what do you complain? No, gentlemen, leave me to deal with him. If any one interferes before I call for aid, he shall never darken these doors again. And you, sir, speak out. What are you muttering there?"

"I said this wasn't a square game—that you are in with that baby yonder, you—" and he heaved a fowl epithet.

They were his last words. Quick as thought the delicate, ringed hand shot forward, holding a revolver. A dazzling flash, a sharp report, and the Mexican fell back, with a horrible yell of agony!

CHAPTER VII.
A FRIEND IN NEED.

INSTANTLY all was confusion. The altercation had been so unexpected, so brief, that the insult was given and avenged before any of the gamblers at the other tables realized that there was anything wrong. But then, hearing the sharp crack of the revolver, the wild, horrible death-yell of the stricken Californian, and seeing the group suddenly shrink back as the dying man fell in agonized convulsions to the floor, knives and revolvers were drawn upon every hand; loud shouts and curses, eager inquiries and hasty explanations that served only to mystify—all bade fair to terminate in a "free fight." One minute of this terrible confusion, then the wild tumult was quelled.

"Gentlemen!" sung a clear voice, musical yet sharp and cutting as a clarion note, as the form of the lady dealer sprang boldly upon the scene, regardless of the golden stakes which were scattered in every direction by her long robes.

"Gentlemen, order! There has nothing occurred worthy your notice. I only punished a thieving, foul-mouthed cur as he deserved. Put up your weapons—I command it—I, Pacific Pete's sister!"

What no living man could have effected, one woman accomplished. As if by magic the weapons were replaced, and the wild, yelling mob became a set of quiet, almost sheepish looking men. It was like the transformation-scene in a pantomime.

"We thought mebbe 'twas some galoot as had 'sulted you, ma'am," ventured the abashed Ginger Dick.

"So it was—but I can take care of myself. Yonder the brute lies, his lying tongue unable to slander an honest woman again. Still, I thank you, friends, for your ready sympathy. Hamibal," she added, turning to the gigantic negro, her voice unmoved. "Remove that carrion. Send some one with it to bury it—your return here, at once!"

Her proud eye glanced quickly around the room. Then the wild, burning fire in those wondrous orbs flashed forth anew, and the gamblers involuntarily started as they heard a sharp, double click, and saw that the death-dealing revolver was pointed at the head of a dark-bearded man who stood close to the table.

"My good sir," in icy accents fell from her lips; "you have made a mistake. That gold is not yours. I beg you will recollect yourself."

With a faint, muttered remonstrance, the crestfallen knave slunk away, and luckily for himself left the room before the crowd of miners fully understood what was in the wind.

A wonderful change came over the proud face as the woman turned toward the spot where Mark Austin and Pike were standing. A soft light filled her eyes; a half-smile parted her ruby lips, and her voice was low—music-personified.

"Pardon me, senior, but you have forgotten your winnings. Yonder *ladrone* thought to confiscate it—"

"Excuse me, lady," stammered Mark, his pale cheek flushing hotly beneath that warm glance. "I—I don't understand you."

"This gold—you won it fairly—it is yours." "But I was only playing for amusement—merely to pass away the time. I don't understand the game—couldn't have told whether I won or lost. I don't want the gold—you keep it—"

"Sir! do you wish to insult me?" "If he does, we'll jest nat'ally chaw him up 'thout—" began Limber Vic, only to be sharply interrupted by the woman.

"Did I ask your assistance, sir? When I do, good; but until then, please don't interfere with my affairs."

"I meant no insult, madam," quietly said Mark. "If you take it in that light, of course I'll take the gold, though I still think it more than my rights."

"Thanks, senior," and the bright glance and bewitching smile made poor Mark's brain whirl and dance like a mad dervish. "I only ask that you will give me my revenge soon—not to-night, but soon. You promise me this?"

Mark bowed in token of assent. He had sense enough left to know that he would make a fool of himself should he attempt to reply in words. And then, aided by Pike, he stored the heavy weight of gold in his pockets, trembling and burning all over as he felt the lustrous eyes bent upon him.

"Brace up, lad," muttered Pike, in Mark's ear, as he noticed more than one quizzical glance cast toward them. "This riff-raff'll think you're green, if you don't mind."

But Austin was just returning the bow and smile of the lady-gambler, and the words buzzed in his ears unheeded. He was like one under the influence of liquor.

"Come," added Pike, gently shaking his comrade. "Come, we'll have a drink and a cigar, just to steady our nerves, then we'll pucker up for home. I was a fool for letting you come out—you're all of a tremble, thanks to your wounds."

Seated at a small round table, the comrades smoked their cigars. Mark paid little attention to aught other than the strange sight before him—the dazzlingly beautiful woman dealing faro for a crowd of rough, uncouth miners. More than once it chanced that their glances met, and at such times the young miner's frame quivered like one undergoing a galvanic shock. His thoughts were not pleasant, despite the marked attention which the woman had paid him. He could not forget the terrible expression that filled her face as she confronted the insolent—an expression, almost devilish—that caused a cold thrill to creep over him even now.

"You're going to be sick—that's what's the matter with you," uneasily broke forth the keen-eyed Pike. "Come, we'd better be traipsin' fer home; mebbe the fresh air'll brighten you up. It is pesky close in here."

Austin made no reply, but followed the old man to the door, when he turned and looked back, just in time to intercept a glowing glance, a bewitching smile and slight bend of the queenly head. He returned the salutation, then passed outside, drawing in a long breath of the pure, sweet air, like one who has just awakened from a troubled dream.

"Well, Mark, how d' you like it, anyhow?" asked Pike, as, arm-in-arm, they passed along the crooked street.

"Would kill me in less than a week!" was the impulsive reply.

"You ain't cool enough. I never see a man play so blamed keener—or bold, which! An' yet it won, every turn. 'F I didn't know you was a stranger to the dealer, I'd swar you was in cahoots! Whichever way you bet—'cept once or twice when you bet both ways—that's jest the way the pasteboards kem up."

"I don't mean the playing. That was the first time I ever entered a gambling-house, and, please God, 'twill be the last. But—that woman! did you notice her?"

"Could I help it? Petticoats ain't so plenty in these diggin's that a feller'd overlook sech a scrounder as this 'ere. She was jest old lightning," she swar. She laid out that greaser mighty slick, an' from the look in her eye, I don't reckon 'twas the first time she'd throwed her meat, nuther. Still, she's a fine specimen—o' the kind."

"I felt as though some one had stolen away my brain and put in its place a boiling teakettle, whenever she looked at me—"

"Which was often enough! You kin go in on your face an' win thar, Mark, ef you like. But take a fool's advice—an' don't. I've seed a heap more o' this world then you have, my boy, an' I've larnt that the Golden Apples of Sodom—or some sich outlandish place—ain't the only things as air pesky nice to look at, but when you bu'st the skin—ashes, n'r quinine, nor assafetida ain't a primin' to the bitterness an' onwholesomeness that's inside—you

hear me talk!" and Pike drew a long breath over the safe delivery of this formidable sentence.

"I don't want to see her again—I hope and trust we will never meet. I can't explain it, even to myself, but she has a strange influence over me. I half-believe that were she to ask me to commit a crime—to steal, or even murder—I couldn't refuse, as long as her eyes were looking into mine. She frightens me—and yet, do you know, I feel just as though I could die contented at her feet, holding her hand—looking into her eyes—"

"It's the bar claws, boy—you hain't got over 'em yet. You'll laugh at this idee, when I mind you of it, a week from this. But I don't reckon we'll see her ag'in. 'Pears like I'm tired o' these diggin's, anyhow. Reckon we'll go prospectin' in a couple of days, eh?"

"I don't know—hallo! we're not the only late travelers. Look yonder!" and Austin pointed out half a dozen dim, phantom-like shadows only a few yards before them.

"Edge in closter to the rocks," muttered Pike, earnestly. "Thar was a rough crowd back yender, an' they all knowed you made a big stake. 'F they mean mischief, stick close by the rocks an' pay 'em in blue pills."

"Some fellows from up-country, come down to spend Sunday, I reckon, and got be—ha!"

"Halt, there!" thundered Pike, as the shadows moved closer. "You keep your distance, or you'll git hurt—sure!"

"It's them!" uttered a deep voice. "Heave in, boys, an' don't leave no botchwork to tell tales!"

"You'll git fiddlers 'lowance here, my bucks—more kobs than ha' pennys, a darned sight! You will have it, then?"

The robbers—if such they were—obeyed their leader, making a bold onset, but as though fearful of alarming the town beyond, they seemed bent on ending the little affair with cold steel. Not so with our friends. Their ready revolvers were out and opened play, the sharp reports echoing from peak to peak, the bright flashes momentarily lighting up the scene, revealing the two miners as they undauntedly confronted the long odds of three to one.

Foiled in their attempt at a surprise, the cut-throats now made use of their pistols, and for a few moments there was a lively fusillade. But night shooting is uncertain at the best—especially so when one is a target as well as marksman, and more ammunition than blood was expended.

Yet matters looked dark for the two honest miners. The enemy was gradually closing in, and a hand to hand struggle could end in but one way.

At that critical moment a report, louder and sharper than that of a revolver, was heard, closely followed by the words:

"Sock it to 'em—chaw 'em up! Cl'ar the track for the 'tarnal green-tailed galoot o' Squeedunk—which is me!"

All doubt as to the side upon which the new-comer meant to fight was quickly ended. With an ear-splitting yell he leaped into the midst of the cut-throats, swinging a heavy rifle around and scattering them like chaff.

"Come on, boys, we'll captivate the hull 'tarnal outfit! Whoreway for our side! Sock it to 'em—up and down, right and left—turn 'em outside in—houp-la! Down you go, of your skull was harder 'n the rock o' Gibraltar!"

"Confused by the furious onset, deceived and bewildered by the shrill yells and shouts of the new-comer, the bandits broke and fled in dismay, leaving two of their number dead upon the field, while more than one of the others bore compliments which would not soon be forgotten.

"Thar they go—fit to run out o' thar skins! He! he! he! he! he! he! But you fellers—how goes it?"

"I'm all right—and you, Mark?" anxiously asked Pike.

"Safe, and with a sound skin, I believe, thanks to this gentleman," promptly responded Austin.

"I think 'twas you," chuckled the opportune arrival. "Reckon you've got your life insured, haint ye? First it's the bar, then these coyotes—"

"Ha! it's you!" cried Mark, springing forward.

"Yes—unless I was changed by the fairies when I was a suckin' baby—it's me, Old Business, chuck up to the han'le. Good boy! I'm glad to cross palms w' you—darned if I ain't, now! But easy—le's take a squint at our meat, hyar. Don't reckon you've got a match?"

Pike was well supplied with the articles, and the bodies of the two men were closely inspected. One was that of the ex-gymnast, Limber Vic; the other was a stranger to all.

"They followed us from the Horn," said Pike, with a shrug. "I reckon they'll be back."

"You bin buckin' against the tiger, I reckon. Didn't git chawed up much?" asked Old Business.

"Mark struck a lead—two o' 'em, in fact," laughed Pike.

"Easy does it, old man," muttered the young miner.

"I won't say a word—she's a mighty fine galoot."

"What are you going to do about this? Take 'em to town?"

"(They're dead—let 'em lay fer thar friends. I reckon they'll come back when their akers is over. I reckon we'd better be makin' tracks. We kin talk as we go. I've bin lookin' fer you two—on business. 'F you'll give me a shar' o' your shanty—"

"A share of everything—whatever I have is yours, my friend."

"I reckon I'll put you to the test sometime. Mebbe 'twill be to-night—or to-morrow, rather, fer it's thar now."

The three men turned and strode away, talking earnestly, all unconscious that they were being dogged.

CHAPTER VIII.
A DELECTABLE QUINTETTE.

A BACKWARD step is seldom pleasant, but the nature of this story requires that we turn back several hours—to about mid-afternoon of the day the evening of which was celebrated by the opening of Pacific Pete's "Golden Horn of Plenty."

Eli Brand was an honored guest at the "Metropolitan Hotel." Honored, because he rented—and paid for in advance—two entire rooms; because he drank champagne at five dollars a pint bottle; because he smoked fine cigars for Windy Gap—and ordered whisky by the gallon; and because he "made hot love" to the gay and dashing—despite her forty years, her painted face, her padded figure, her false hair and her red nose—better half of the landlady, Mrs. Arabella Spriggs.

Eli Brand had sullenly obeyed the order conveyed him by Juan Cabrera, simply because he dare not refuse, though few men had more substantial reasons for shunning Windy Gap than the black-browed adventurer. Yet

a week had rolled by without his being recognized, and Brand's fears were tolerably quieted upon that score. Yet whenever he stepped out of doors he was invariably "well heeled," and his keen eye roved restlessly about, as though expecting some ghost of the past to confront him at every step.

On the afternoon in question Eli Brand was entertaining a select party in his own room—so select that the doors were locked and bolted, the rude pine table being drawn up in the corner furthest from any other occupied room. Upon the table stood a box of cigars, a quart bottle of whisky, and five glasses. Around the table sat four men, busily engaged in sampling the articles, casting occasional glances toward Brand, who was slowly pacing the room, his head bent, his brow corrugated, an uneasy look in his eyes.

"Enough of that," the host cried, a sudden change coming over him. "Business first—get drunk afterwards, if you please."

"Look at that, now! An' is it *mean* little quart y'd-b-b after tillin' us not to git drunk over? Whoo! an' it's Mickel Lynch is the bye c'd lay out the fit bottle an' he never draw the long brith affter, at all, at all!" exclaimed a red-headed dwarfed giant, whose brogue—"the hair on his teeth"—placed his nationality beyond dispute.

"When your work is done will be time enough. I'll stand the racket for one day, though you drink enough to float a steamboat."

"You must have a deep interest in the matter, Brand," quietly spoke another; a fair-haired, smooth-faced youth, handsome as Sir Launcelot; another evidence that beauty is but skin-deep, for Frank Mason fled New York for the murder of his own father, and his exploits in California had richly earned for him the sobriquet "Devil's Frank."

"No more than you or any of the band here," was the quick reply. "But I'll tell you the whole affair, and then you can see your work. There is a man lurking round these parts who wants putting out of the way. Easy enough, you will say—but I don't know. The curse is a perfect devil!"

"Divil the one o' me'll fight ag'in the devil," hastily interrupted Mike Lynch. "It's bad luck, sure, to be—"

"The devil and you 'always fight on the same side, Irish, so you needn't be alarmed," chuckled Frank.

"Let up on your sparring—I tell you it's business first, and that reminds me our man calls himself Old Business."

"I know him; a dirty, greasy-looking varmint, but with a eye thet cuts clean through ye, quicker'n a center-bit," exclaimed a tall, gaunt worthy.

"The same. But let me go on. He is some kind of a spy or detective, I think, in disguise. Anyhow, he has got hold of some of our secrets. The other day—the first time we met—he made me hot, and I took a squint at him over a revolver, but before I could lay daylight through him he made the secret pass—like this. You know that none but proved members of 'the family' are privileged to use that sign, so, of course, I had to let up, supposing, of course, that he was some new hand, out on private business for the chief. You can guess how I was took down when the chief denied all knowledge of him, and declared that he was an impostor. Not only that, but he said this man must be put out of the way, at once."

"Good enough—far as it goes," quietly observed Devil's Frank. "But I reckon I'll 'pass out.' There are some men who are better pleased at having their orders disobeyed, and the boss is so full of his tricks—all in an honest way, of course—that I think I'll wait for a second dispatch."

"You've cut your eye-teeth, Frank, and so have I," laughed Brand. "That is the very idea that struck me. Of course I didn't speak as plainly to him as you did just now—he ain't that kind of a man. But I told him I didn't believe I could get boys to mind me; that I had no influence among them; would he just give me a word over his own list?" and Brand produced a slip of paper from his breast pocket. "It runs thus:

"The family will obey the bearer in everything, until I publicly revoke this order."
(Signed) VINCENT BARADA."

"It's his list, sure enough. That settles it, then. Well, what are your plans, since you are to be boss?"

"Simple enough. We are to rub 'him out,' at the first chance. If I don't mistake, that will be to-night. I know that he is not far from here. What more natural, then, than he'll be at the

tim did not put in an appearance. Then came the sudden tragedy. The quintette was strongly agitated, even more so than the circumstances would seem to justify, for certainly bloodshed was no novelty to them.

Yet the explanation was simple. The Californian was one of their comrades, belonged to the same band, the members of which were bound by a solemn oath to avenge each other—to exact blood for blood; to carry out to its utmost extent the law, "eye for eye and tooth for tooth."

With a slight motion of his hand, Eli Brand signaled his men to follow him, and left the building. In a sheltered nook where there was no danger of being overheard, they put their heads together and earnestly discussed the subject. That they were greatly excited was evident, yet before they could arrive at any decision, they were interrupted by the sound of fire-arms, coming from a point at no great distance above them.

As with one accord the quintette dropped their argument, and with drawn revolvers, rushed toward the spot, with no other end in view than to see the fun and, possibly, take a hand in, according to circumstances. But they were too late for either.

"Halt!" cried Brand, in an eager but subdued tone, as a loud voice came to his ear. "That's our man!"

"What're you stopping for, then?" snarled Devil's Frank.

"There's other voices—he's not alone. We don't want to give cause for any more talk than is absolutely necessary. We'll dog him to his hole, and then stop his wind."

"I don't like such snaking business; I'd rather folks I know who was giving them a benefit, when I tackle 'em," grumbled the youthful desperado.

"Yonder they are—striking a light! Look! that's our meat—the one with gray hair and beard."

"He's with Gentleman Mark and Long Pike. They stick together, what then?"

"We must wait and take the chances. They're going, now. Follow me, and don't make noise enough to startle a weasel, or we'll lose our game yet. He's sharp as a needle, and quick as old lightning!"

These were the dark figures who so noiselessly dogged the trio as they left the scene of the outthrusts' defeat. And all unsuspecting of his danger, Old Business laughed and chatted as though he had known his companions for a lifetime.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 296.)

WHAT IS THIS LIFE?

What is this life? What man should cling,
With all his vital power,
To such a narrow, shortened span,
A fleeting, fitful hour?

Compacted with vast eternity,
How short indeed 's the span!
Through three-score years and ten, are said,
To mark the life of man.

In youth, all things seem bright and fair,
With hope to lead us on;
Our paths are paths of pleasure,
No clouds obscure our sun.

In manhood's prime, with strength to dare,
We plan and work with will;
Not doubting that with efforts brave
We shall ascend the hill.

That hill, which has on all its sides
Rough, craggy points to suit;
Against which many and oft the strong
Have struggled but to fail.

In middle life we look about
To find our efforts vain;
With courage still, and hopes renewed,
We launch our bark again.

The sea we sail has many gales,
And many a rock-bound coast;
Its hidden reefs, sand-bars and shoals,
We find, when wrecked at last.

As age comes on, how aimless seem
The struggles we have made!
Whatever of earthly good we've gained
Must in our graves be laid.

If worldly honors, fame or wealth
We strive to gain, at last,
True wisdom teaches us to hope
Our dreams of joy are past.

There is a treasure far above
All schemes of worldly strife;
Secured beyond all hopes and fears,
In eternal life.

The Prairie Rover:

OR,
THE ROBIN HOOD OF THE BORDER.

BY BUFFALO BILL,
AUTHOR OF "DEADLY EYE, THE UNKNOWN
SCOUT," ETC.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MISSIONARY PRIEST.

UPON the afternoon following the arrival of Nina, in the stronghold of Robin Hood and his band, and near the sunset hour, a horseman was slowly wending his way in the direction of the robber retreat.

His horse seemed tired out, and travel-stained, and the rider wore a look of fatigue, as if he had journeyed many long, weary miles.

The form of the horseman was tall and manly, though the effect of his fine physique was destroyed beneath the humble garb of a Roman Catholic priest, and in spite of the heat of the sun he wore the cap of his order.

The face of the priest was clean-shaven, and the hair cut short, but notwithstanding its every feature was good, and in the expression of the eyes and mouth there was a look of fearlessness and determination, which the sanctity of his calling had not wholly destroyed.

Upon the front of his worn saddle was a revolver and knife, ready to protect life in case of necessity, and behind the saddle was a blanket and a leather roll containing the provisions for food, and his book of prayers.

Following the plain trail leading to the hills, the priest soon came upon a small stream, where his horse halted for water, just as the sound of hoofs was heard, and the next instant up dashed a steed and rider.

With surprise the priest beheld a young girl well-mounted, and apparently a thorough horsewoman, for upon discovering him she wheeled her steed quickly to the right-about, as if to fly from danger; but discovering at a glance his peaceful calling, she halted and advanced slowly toward him, saying, in strangely sweet tones:

"Holy father, at first your presence startled me; but now I fear you not."

"Thanks, my daughter; I would not willingly cause one so pure and good as you look to fear me."

"I am a humble follower in the footsteps of my Savior, and am seeking to convert the heathen in this God-forsaken land; but what do you here?"

"I live further up the valley, and thither you must accompany me, for, even in our rude camp there are those who will be glad to see

you and have you confess their sins, for they are indeed sinful."

"Daughter, it is my duty to go where I can be of service to my fellow-creatures."

"I will accompany you."

Side by side the two then rode on together, and ere the sun sunk to rest behind the hills, they arrived in the robber camp.

Leading the way directly toward the cabin of the chief, they soon arrived in front of the door, and the maiden called out to the Prairie Robin Hood, who was seated upon the piazza idly smoking a huge meerschaum pipe.

"Father, I have brought a guest home with me."

"In God's name, Maud, who have you there?"

somewhat angrily said the chief, rising and aiding the maiden to alight.

"I have one who will be a vision of comfort to many poor souls in this camp who desire to confess their evil deeds."

"Always doing some act to incur my displeasure, child."

"No, sir, I have done nothing to cause you to speak thus; this worthy priest I found by the brook and brought home with me."

"Father Foley, this is my father, the chief of the outlaw band, and the man who is known as the Robin Hood of the Prairie."

"I have heard of you, my son, and of your wicked career; but as there was repentance for the chief on the cross, so there may—"

"Hark ye, Sir Priest, you come here as my daughter's guest, and I will respect the pledge; but I warn you to keep your preaching for ears better attuned to it than are mine."

"Dismiss, sir, and your wants shall be attended to, and my word for it you will not refuse a good glass of brandy that I can offer you."

"A little wine for the stomach's sake, my son, is good—"

"Yes, and for your stomach's sake, you men of the cloth will go a great way; come, my man, dismount, and together we will have many a social chat, but, mind you, none of your Christian doctrines for me, for I am outlawed by God and man, and want none of them."

"Here, Henderson, take the priest's horse, and see that he is cared for, and let the men and women know that we have a lamb in our flock of wolves, should they wish to get absolution for their sins, and thus, with the record rubbed out, commence anew to burn, pillage and murder."

Speaking thus bitterly, the chief strode away, while the maiden, whom Robin Hood had called Maud, led the priest into the house and set before him a hearty supper, which the holy father partook of with evident relish.

A week passed away and still the worthy priest lingered at the robber camp, and he had become a great favorite with all who went to him for comfort and absolution.

With the chief, Father Foley had little to do, for having informed him that his church sent him out among the heathen savages, and that, unmolested by any of them, he had roamed for years among the tribes, he seemed to rather avoid Robin Hood.

"You certainly have not run loose among the tribes of my acquaintance, my worthy disciple, or they'd have raised the short hair on your head, short as it is, if they would have had to apply to the Indian agency for tweezers to tear it off with."

"Why, man, they would scalp your master, the Pope, and think no more of it than your cloth do of mingling your prayers with whiskey."

After this conversation Father Foley seemed to shun the chief, who was really constantly engaged in the duties of his command.

But what surprised the priest most was the presence of the beautiful Maud in that robber retreat, and her calling Robin Hood by the sacred name of father.

That she was his daughter was evident, for there was a strong likeness between them, only the maiden's face wore none of the stern and hard expressions that flitted across her parent's, and her life seemed one of perfect purity.

True, she seemed sad at times, for she keenly felt her father's terrible life and the dangers he ran daily, but then she was ever affectionate and cheerful before him, and seemed the silver lining upon his cloudless existence, the single ray of sunlight that entered his gloomy heart, for he was wholly wrapped up in his beautiful daughter, whom he had taught himself in various branches of education, until Maud was a refined, intelligent and accomplished young lady, devoting her leisure hours to drawing, painting and music, for she was a fine performer upon the guitar, and possessed a voice of marvelous richness and power.

Was it a wonder then that the priest felt a deep interest in the maiden, and still lingered at the stronghold, anxious to win the fair young girl from her cruel associations, and cause her father to allow her to seek a home in a society which she could adorn?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RESCUE.

ONE pleasant afternoon, ten days after the arrival of the priest in the robber camp, three persons were seated upon horseback upon the side of a small hill, gazing out upon the prairie spread out before them with almost boundless expanse.

Two of the parties were maidens, one of them, Maud, the robber chief's daughter, the other Nina Vernon.

The third person was the priest, Father Foley, who was allowed every privilege in the camp, and had accompanied the young ladies for a ride upon the prairie.

After gazing a while in silence upon the level landscape, the priest turned to Maud and said, quietly:

"Lady, I have to thank you for more kindness than I can ever repay, but you will have your own reward."

"Through your kindness I have been received in the robber camp of your father, and thereby enabled to accomplish the object for which I came here."

"Listen, while I tell you why I came and make known to you that I have deceived you, that I am not what I seem."

Surprise was visible upon the beautiful face of Maud, but she merely bowed for the priest to continue, and said nothing.

A slight flush overspread the face of Father Foley, and he resumed in the same soft and pleasant voice in which he had before spoken:

"Many miles from here there lives a man who is your father's enemy; an enemy because, in the discharge of his military duties, he once condemned your parent to die for his crimes; pardon me, but I must speak plainly."

"That foe of your father has a pleasant home, almost within the shadow of the post, and there dwell his sister and daughter, in peace and happiness, until the robber Robin Hood of the Border swooped upon the dove-cot, in revenge, and bore the maiden away, his intention being to force the commandant of the fort to feel his revenge by putting the maiden to death."

"Could my father do so foul a deed? He never wars against women," indignantly replied the maiden.

"True, he has that redeeming trait; but he is bitter in his love of revenge, and the life of Miss Vernon was to be sacrificed to avenge himself upon the father for having once condemned him to die upon the gallows, and from which ignominious doom you, his daughter, rescued him."

"Mel! How know you this, Father Foley?"

"I know that you played ghost and frightened the poor superstitious Irish sentinel, who guarded your father, to death, and that you bravely rescued your Robin Hood from his doom, although in years you were then a mere child; also, I know that last night your father gave the order for the murder of Miss Vernon, and that her scalp was to be sent to the post."

"Horrible! This shall not be done, sir; priest; you have my word for it," cried Maud, her face paling and eyes flashing fire.

"Lady, I know your influence is great, but I prefer not to risk it."

"I said I was deceiving you, and in truth I am, for I am no priest."

"What! who then are you?" cried Maud, in amazement.

"I am one whom you have once met before; one who gave chase to you some days since, when we met in the motto to the southward."

"You are, then, that man? Well, I distanced you, did I not, although your horse was a fleet one? But how you are disguised!"

"It would not be safe for the Prairie Rover to visit this spot."

"The Prairie Rover? You, then, are that man? Oh! how I have longed to see you, for I love to hear of your daring deeds."

"Prairie Rover, you are a brave man, and I am so glad you are not a priest, and Maud's face flushed crimson, and her eyes drooped as she made the remark.

Then she quickly continued: "But what danger you are in here: quick! fly! ere my father knows you in your true light."

"Lady, I pledged my word to Colonel Vernon to rescue his daughter, and I came hither for that purpose, and Miss Vernon has known me in my true light since the first night I arrived, for her woman's eye penetrated a disguise which none of the band have done, although they have often met me."

"When I asked you to ride hither this afternoon, it was for the purpose of escaping with Miss Vernon; but let me urge that you also come with us, for sooner or later the end must come, and you will be cast helpless upon the world."

"Yes, Maud, let me beg you to come with us, and be my sister, and my father will be a father to you."

"No one need know that you are the daughter of the noted Robin Hood, for my father will willingly resign and return east, if I wish it; and then he will have two daughters instead of one."

"Come, Maud. Come with me," and Nina put her arms affectionately round her beautiful companion, who trembled like an aspen leaf, and great tears stood in her eyes.

"No, I will not be tempted. I will remain. I long ready to see the great world beyond, to meet my fellow men and women whose brows are not branded with crime; but I owe my first duty to my father."

"Whatever he may be to others, cold and stern though is his nature, to me he has been ever kind, and I know that I am all he has to love in the world."

"I am glad that we have met, Nina, and you, sir, I can never forget; but I must stay here with my father."

"Quick! hasten! for you have no time to lose, would you keep ahead of the human bloodhounds that are long will be on your trail; so fly at once; and Nina, take my mare, she is the fleetest on the prairie, and the scout rides one that has few equals, so you can have a better chance of escape; no, no, do not say me nay, but change horses with me at once," and the noble girl sprang to the ground.

"It is best, Miss Vernon," replied the disguised scout, and he instantly set about changing the saddles and bridles upon the horses, while the two maidens seemed almost heart-broken at parting, Maud because her friend, whom she had learned to love so dearly, was perhaps forever going from her, and Nina to have to leave behind, amid a robber's camp, the beautiful girl whom she so longed to have go with her.

"Miss Maud, and now we must part."

It was the scout who spoke, and his voice was sad and tremulous.

Maud said nothing. Her form trembled, and tears chased each other down her cheek.

"Yes, we must part now, but only for awhile, for I will return if you say so; I will again come into the robber camp, in some disguise, or other, to see you; for never will I give you up until you bid me go from you."

The maiden raised her beautiful eyes, gave one searching look into the face before her, and replied softly:

"You must not risk your life, but I long so much to see you again."

"Say I can come, and my desire to see you will prevent me from risking my life."

"You can come."

As the maiden answered, and before the scout could reply, she suddenly started back, her face paling, and her lips parting, with "All is lost! See! there comes my father!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A TERRIBLE CONFESSION.

IT WAS too true! coming slowly around the base of the hill, and some two hundred yards distant, was the Robin Hood of the Border, following the trail leading to his retreat in the hills.

As the eyes of all three fell upon the majestic form of the robber chief, there suddenly came the sharp crack of a rifle from some unseen foe, a loud, war-cry, and throwing his arms wildly in the air, Robin Hood reeled in his saddle and fell heavily to the ground.

The war-cry heard was echoed by a wild scream from Maud, and together the three dashed down the hill toward the fallen man.

But suddenly from a dark covert on the hillside darted a tall and wild-looking form, and with the speed of an antelope rushed toward the prostrate chief.

"Great God! it is Wild Wolf!" cried the scout, and he drove the spurs into Comrade and urged him on, at the same time calling out to the Indian.

But wrapped up in the joy of his revenge, the Indian warrior neither saw nor heard—his victim only was before him.

"God in heaven! he will scalp him before the eyes of his daughter," cried the scout, and he half drew his revolver from his holster; but, as if altering his determination, he urged Comrade on, and the next instant bounding to the ground seized Wild Wolf as he was bending over the wounded man to take his scalp.

"Hold! Wild Wolf; I bid you hold!" sternly

cried the scout, as the Indian seemed inclined to still rush upon the wounded chief.

"Wild Wolf has killed the hound of the prairie; let him take his scalp."

"No; yonder comes the daughter of this man, and she shall see him die in peace, for you have taken his life."

"Will you yield this to me, or shall the knife be drawn between us?" and the scout spoke with deadly firmness.

"Wild Wolf has no knife for the heart of his white brother."

"The Prairie Rover must not be angry with his red brother."

"The Prairie Rover! are you the one whom men call the Prairie Rover?"

It was the deep voice of the robber chief, and quickly the scout turned toward him.

"Yes, chief; I came hither in the disguise of a priest to take from your power the daughter of Colonel Vernon; but here comes your poor daughter and she will explain all," replied the scout, and on dashed Maud, followed by Nina.

"My father! oh, God! he is dying," and Maud threw herself beside him.

"Yes, Maud, I am dying; I feel that my moments are numbered."

"And here stands your murderer—"

"Hold! lady, yonder man has but avenged himself for a wrong done him in years gone by; nay, put up your pistol, for he is my friend, and I will not see him harmed."

The scout spoke firmly, and glancing into his face, relinquished her hold upon the weapon she had drawn from her belt, and again knelt beside her father.

"Maud, daughter, I have been to you a cruel father, for I have reared you here amid wild scenes of carnage; but I feel that you will forgive me, and when you hear my confession you will think kindly of me."

"Father, oh! father, who else have I to love?"

"Oh, God! must he be taken from me thus, and I be left all alone in the world?"

"We all have our time to die, Maud, and the hand of death is upon me now; sooner or later his icy touch will still your pulse."

"But, as I stand upon the brink of the grave, as I cast a bitter glance of retrospection over the past, I would have you hear my history; nay, turn not your eyes in hatred upon yonder poor, untutored child of the forest; for in years gone by he was a sufferer by my hand, and all he loved was torn from him by my ruthless followers, so he only carried out the instinct of his nature, and in revenge took my life."

I would not have died thus; but vain are human hopes and regrets now for me, and it may be best, for strange as it may seem, I feel now no enmity toward my fellow-men, and thank God, I die ere my crime-stained soul was stained with the blood of yonder innocent maiden."

"Thank you, scout; hold me thus, and I suffer less pain from this wound through which my life is ebbing fast away."

"Maud, long years ago, ere you were born, I was an innocent man, a wild youth perhaps, but still not sinful."

"Then across my life there came a cloud, a damning cloud; for betrayed by one whom I believed most true, one of kindred blood, we fought, and he fell by my hand."

"But, there my sorrows only began, for my act cast me out from a mother's love, and from the affection of every human being, save one, and she I learned to love with my whole heart."

"That one, Maud, was your mother, who, when I first met her, was engaged to another, a noble man, who would have made her life happy had I not darkened her path."

"Finding I was disinherited by my mother, and with no one to speak a kind word to me, I intended turning my back forever upon my home, when I discovered that I was loved by your mother, and I could not leave without her to guide my wandering footsteps through life."

"But, alas! more bloodshed fell to my lot; for the man to whom she was engaged sought me out, challenged me, and we met upon the fatal field of honor."

"He fell by my hand, and ere I could reach the spot where he lay bleeding, a horseman dashed up and furiously attacked me."

"It was the brother of your mother, Maud. In vain was it that I warned him off, and to keep him at bay shot his horse; he rushed upon me, firing as he came, and in self-defense I shot him through the heart."

"Oh, God, have mercy upon you."

"His mercy will never fall on me, Maud. Yes, he fell by my hand, and then I fled the hated home where I had passed my boyhood years."

"But, with me went the woman of my love, your mother, Maud."

"Hunted down for the crimes I had committed, I fled to Mexico, and became a wanderer, to roam into this portion of the country where your mother, ever true to me, followed with you, then a mere child."

"One night the military visited my house, accompanied by a band of settlers, and in the skirmish that followed, for I would not submit tamely, your mother was killed."

"From that day, Maud, I became a very devil, and well you know my career since."

The chief paused, and the deep voice of the scout asked:

"Was the mother of this young girl your wife?"

"She was; we were married in New Orleans."

"Thank God! Ernest Maltravers, I forgive you all the sorrow that you have caused me."

"Who is it that calls the name of Ernest Maltravers?" cried the chief, his face flushing, as he raised himself upon his elbow, and peered searchingly into the face of the scout.

"Oh, whom you had believed you had slain, Ernest Maltravers."

"I am Percy Le Roy."

"God, I thank thee; I am not bowed down by that crime in my dying hour," and the chief fell back with a groan.

"And you forgive me, Percy Le Roy?"

"Yes, I forgive you from my heart, Ernest Maltravers, though since my recovery from the fearful wound you gave me, I have been on your track, seeking revenge."

"I tracked you to Mexico, and I trailed you hither, yet only a few days since did I find that you were he that was called the Robin Hood of the Border, for you were young then, and you have changed greatly since last we met."

"When, by accident, I found that Robin Hood was none other than Ernest Maltravers, it pained me most deeply, for I had a tie awakening in my heart that destroyed my intended revenge against you, and bound me to you with a bond I hope will not be severed."

"And that tie is?" sadly said the chief, his eyes closing.

"Your daughter! Ernest Maltravers, you are dying; your sands of life are well run out, and this child will be alone in the world."

"Leave her to my charge, and in the family

of Colonel Vernon she will find a home until she is willing to become my wife, for I love her as dearly as I once did her mother, and in her face I see the look of Ruth Reginald."

"Maud, my child, the man before you I once did a great wrong; he forgives me all the sorrow I have caused him, and, if in your heart there is a bond of feeling that will awaken into love, take him, and for my sake be a noble wife to him, for he is a noble man."

"Father, your wish will be my law; but is there no hope, no thought that you may recover, and in the future lead a different life, free from these wild scenes?" and Maud bent her lips and pressed them to her father's brow.

"Child, I have not half an hour to live; already clouds of death pass before my eyes, and I feel—that—but you forgive me, do you not, Le Roy—and you—my child, do you give your erring father; but do not—do not forget him, even though he was the cruel Robin Hood of the Border—"

"Here, child, take my hand; and you, Le Roy, take my other hand, and—oh, God! bless these two, even though my memory be forever accursed!"

The lustrous eyes were closed from view, the strong form trembled, a sigh parted the stern lips, and Ernest Maltravers, the man whose life had been one long scene of crime, ceased to breathe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

IN the commandant's pleasant rooms at the fort, one delightful afternoon, some ten days after the death of Ernest Maltravers, the Robin Hood of the Border, sat Colonel Vernon and Percy Le Roy, earnestly discussing the stirring incidents of the past few weeks.

When the colonel had heard the whole story of the scout's adventure as a priest in the robber camp, and his return to the fort, after the death of the chief, accompanied by Maud and Nina, he said, with feeling:

"Thank God! all is over now, and there is some prospect that our lives may glide quietly along in the future."

"To you, Le Roy, I owe more than I can ever repay, for you have saved me my child, who is far dearer to me than life itself."

"You have been a great sufferer, my friend, but, 'let the dead past bury its dead,' and all will be well."

"Now I wish you to meet my sister, Miss Vernon, whose early life was also clouded, causing her to leave gay society, and accompany me to this far frontier, where she has been as a mother to Nina—oh

THE SATURDAY JOURNAL

Published every Monday morning at nine o'clock.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 20, 1875.

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Sunshine Papers.

Chivalry and the Times.

It was a century ago that it was asserted, by one of the most eloquent men of his time, the "age of chivalry is gone!" And we, of this latter half of the nineteenth century, scanning the social circles in which we move, and looking back over those hundred years past, are almost forced to accept the truth of the proposition, and believe that time has but carved its characters into capitals. But we would not be less just than even Mr. Carlyle. We cannot remain blind to the glancing glances of the manners of the times, we would still gladly believe and prove, if may be, that chivalry is not quite a grace entirely of the past.

The primary significance of the word chivalry was, a mounted soldier; a horseman; a knight. But as the conference of knighthood, or the admission to the privilege of bearing arms, was a ceremony of no trifling importance, and only granted to the sons of noble and wealthy families, chivalry came to be a synonym for those excellencies of manners, and of character, which were the required qualifications for knighthood, such as dexterity of use of defensive weapons, warlike skill and strength, boldness, heroism and generosity.

This service of chivalry was, really, a department of the old English military system; and into this we have no call to investigate, since, as a social structure, it has absolutely passed away. Over two hundred years ago, Ben Jonson acknowledged it dead, when he wrote:

"The house of chivalry decayed,
Or rather ruined seems, her buildings laid
Flat with the earth, that were the pride of Time;
Those obelisks and columns broke and down,
That crown the stars, and raised the British
Crown

To be a constellation.
When to the structure went more noble names
Than to the Ephesian Temple lost in flames,
When every stone was laid by virtuous hands."

"By virtuous hands." Chivalry was of gentle blood. It held defense of the weak and fair an honor, and ranked honor dearer than life. It was at once strong and gallant, warlike and elegant, brave and courteous, bold and generous. Chaucer gives us this insight into the chivalry of his age:

"He was a very perfect gentle knight,
He could songs make, and well indite."

Spenser wrote: "A gentle knight was pricking on the plain," and Ferriar speaks in the same line of "knightly counsel, and heroic deed." And true knighthood is graphically photographed in the words of Sir Pavon:

"I never turned in flight
Till treason wrought my harm,
Not then, before my shattered sword
Weighed down my shattered arm.

"I never broke mine oath,
Forgot my friend or foe,
Nor left a benefit unpaid
With west, or wrong with woe.

"Keep thee from me! I said,
Still, ere my blows began,
Nor gashed mine unarmed enemy,
Nor smote a fellow man.

"Observing every rule
Of generous chivalry;
And maid and matron ever found
A champion leaf in me."

But the deeds of Sir Pavon are legends of the past; the service of chivalry has decayed; in the abstract the system exists only in remembrances of ancient days, and upon its decay is set the seal of the announcement that "the age of chivalry is gone!" But is that the age of chivalry is gone? Shall we, if there is the slightest cause for defense, be dumb, and let our comrades, our friends, our countrymen, rest under the ignominy of the imputation that they have been born in an age to which the grand old graces of gentle blood are alien and unknown? Never! But, alas! as we look along the great avenues of our social world, we feel, with bitter shame, that we have scarce a cause to defend. Yet, remembrance of individual instances of chivalric spirit and deed appeal to us for their need of approbation, and inspire us to claim for our own age that the existence of chivalry is not quite extinct.

We can never refuse our reverence to one person, who is the impersonation of the chivalrous men of old, though he is but a negro. Always from him the gallantly lifted hat, the bestowment of every courteous attention, the performance of every generous deed, to all who know him; and the polished manners of his eighty years are well worth the imitation of the youths of to-day. But if it be claimed that, descended from a family of slaves, he may but possess the servile instincts of a race of bondmen, let us, at least, rejoice that in our age happened that chivalrous act, and was expressed that chivalrous sentiment, of a noted statesman who responded to the bow of an old negro, by lifting his hat and standing aside for her to pass; and when questioned if he knew her, answered:

"No, sir; but I cannot allow myself to be outdone in politeness by a poor colored woman."

But instances of real chivalry are exceptional, rather than the workings of any universal principle. It is true we have plenty of men finished in every rule of etiquette, but too often are they merely exponents of a certain system of training in which all innate gallantry and heroism is lacking. What we would be proud to find among our countrymen is a prevalence of that truly chivalrous spirit which is the delicate, refined, and powerful essence of all those graces which constitute real manliness. For, our American social life, be it in the political, business, or social world, seems not overrun with many men. To find combined bravery, boldness, firmness, dignity, and nobility in one sample of masculinity has appeared rather an exception than the rule.

Yet of all nations our own needs a prevailing spirit of chivalry. Here the sexes and all classes of individuals are compelled, for limited periods at least, to meet as equals. We have common interests, and are often obliged to accept common privileges, that force recognition of equality. This system, like all other social systems, has its drawbacks. Among its chief annoyances are the distasteful meetings, the rude contacts, the indiscriminate associations into which every person is more or less often forced. In no way could this evil be so meliorated, and the standard of our social structure elevated, as by the universal cultivation and display of chivalry, that will constrain every manly man to make himself pleasing and agreeable to his neighbor, and to be brave and swift in defense of honor and the protection of the weak.

A PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

UNCLE JACOB.
Poor old Uncle Jacob! What a miserable life he leads, and how much he must suffer in his imaginings that the world is all turned upside down; that there is no faith to be put in mankind, and no trust in womankind. He seems to believe there is no hope for those who read the story papers and novels. Oh! what a sin it is—in his estimation—to persevere a work of fiction! He sighs for the good old Bible days, and yet he appears to forget that in those same old Bible days there were such individuals as Cain, Judas, Delilah, and others of the same ilk.

You see, he wants the world regenerated, and the way he goes to work to bring about that result is to sit in a corner and moan. Precious little good that is going to do to the world, or even to himself. He knows that everybody is harboring evil thoughts, every one is plotting mischief and planning wickedness. Every new railway that is built is so much more sure death, according to his theory. He is morally certain that the world is very much out of order, and its inhabitants all bad—

all except himself; he does not mingle in the "romps and vanities of the world." It's very lucky he doesn't, for his woful wishes and doleful countenance would drive all the joy from any party. A smile is his aversion, and a laugh his abomination. He has no pleasure except when he is prophesying misfortune and ill luck. For forty years he has been prophesying that the world will come to an end on the following week, but it hasn't come to pass yet. He is always seeing signs in the moon that foretell a drought, or a grasshopper plague, or a season that the caterpillars are coming to destroy all the vegetation, or a hurricane is to sweep over the land, or another city is to be destroyed by fire. These thoughts make the time pass pleasantly to him; they cheer him up and convince him that he is doing duty to himself and the rest of mankind by letting others share these dismal forebodings. He will tell you there is to be another panic and no one will have any money. Then the people will starve to death, and there will be no money to bury anybody with.

Every bit of clothing one purchases he considers to be a piece of reckless extravagance; he thinks we ought to do as he does—only wear second-hand clothing; that might "pay," but there isn't enough of it to go round, and some people would object; I know I should. You would not catch Uncle Jacob at any entertainment or exhibition. He looks upon all such matters as inventions of the evil one, and would sooner take up a red-hot poker than go to any kind of a "show." Some people say it is not so much the attending the place, looking at it in a moral light, as the loss of the admission fee he would feel, but you know there are many uncharitable persons in the world.

Uncle Jacob believes that the world is a modern Sodom and that we shall awake some morning to see fire and brimstone pouring upon us "and it will be just what you all deserve." According to Uncle Jacob's idea about matters, there is nothing good whatever in this sphere we inhabit. If the sun shines to day, what of that? He knows it will rain to-morrow and then what good have we done by enjoying the pleasant weather? He considers it wrong for us to love the least thing, animate or inanimate, because he considers it the same as though we set up for ourselves idols to worship. Poor blind creature! He does not seem to consider that if God had not intended

us to love the works of His hands He would not have made them so beautiful, and a few arms, I would not feeling so well satisfied with the idea of future revenge that I didn't notice a horse and buggy standing in the street. I have the satisfaction of knowing that the owner had a little bill of repairing the next day to settle, but I was in search of the fire and couldn't stop long.

I think I turned more corners—some of them quite successfully—than any man ever did in search of a fire.

I came to be almost disgusted at it, and didn't care whether there was a fire or not, and so I quit yelling; and when some one told me it was a false alarm I walked toward home, computing on the way that I had run seven miles and a half, and afterward found I had left the front door open, and that many articles of value were missing in the morning.

Fires can do the best they can to get along without me, after this.

EVE LAWLESS.

Foolsap Papers.

Going to a Fire.

My wife gave me a severe shaking, and I said, "That's all right, I'll settle that little bill to-morrow, sure."

She repeated her shaking, and I woke clear up, and she said there was a fire somewhere, and I said it was surely not in our stove—no such good luck for me—but I hoped it was.

She asked me if I didn't hear the bells ringing and the people crying fire?

I dug the sleep out of my ears and got excited, and said I did.

She said it might be in the next house, and our own might be in danger.

So I sprung out and fell on the floor, and injured the varnish on a chair with my head, so my wife told me the next morning.

I began to get more frightened by degrees; I think I was a few degrees above fright.

I hunted around for my clothes and knocked the lamp off the stand, and tried to get my foot into my coat-sleeve—my wife hurrying me all the time.

Feeling down for my shoes I injured the corner of the stand with my left ear, and stepped as lightly as I could on a piece of the lamp chimney, and jumping back I upset the crib and poured out the baby on the floor—every bit of it. Amid the baby's vociferous objections and my wife's, not having found any matches where they never are when wanted, I found my pants, and after two or three trials got them on wrong again and let them go.

I saw that the emergency demanded the greatest haste, and succeeded admirably in getting the right boot half on my left foot, and, with perfect immunity from harm, I broke a strap in the attempt to pull it on or off, I didn't care which.

My wife kept hurrying me up with all the words that she could muster—and you can imagine that all the spelling-book, including the title page, was brought into requisition.

When I tried to put on a corset for a vest I was mad indeed.

I would have given fifty cents for just a little bit of the other end of a match.

When I struck my foot against the rocker of a chair and knocked it over I was sorry I did not break its neck as well as its back.

I wouldn't have known I had put on my wife's sack for my coat if I hadn't noticed the shortness of its length.

I found my other boot on the other side of the room hiding under the lounge, but my stockings were in China for all I knew, expressly for the occasion—the pair I did find were too long.

If I hadn't dropped my watch out of my vest-pocket and smashed the crystal, I would not have been half so mad as I was.

I didn't care a cent for the plaster Cupid which I knocked off of a bracket, and the pitcher—it had no right to be in the way of a man who had business on the brain.

I am one of that class of human beings who, if they would pile all their clothes together on a chair on retiring, and tie them down with a clothesline, on getting up at night would find every article was laughing at him in the dark from some other corner of the room.

After two or three attempts to get the wrong arm into the right sleeve of my coat, and hastily snatching a hat, which I afterward found had too much ribbon and too many flowers for a male hat, I started for the door and found that the key had been taken out and hid away by my wife before she went to bed, and that she had forgotten where she hid it.

I had so many mishaps before I started that I seriously thought I would not enjoy the fire a bit if I ever got to it.

I had taken only three steps at a time in going down the front steps, I think I would have been all right, but I made three and a half, about, and when I raked a half-inanimate body up off the sidewalk, and on close inspection found it bore some faint resemblance to myself, I could have kicked myself all around town, but had not time enough to do the charitable act, nor breath enough in me to call me awful names; I thereby escaped a well-merited scourging.

The first thing I could do was to yell "fire," and started off on a run—against a lamp-post which was blown out—the light, not the post. I wish the post had been.

I was sorry I ran against it. It had never done anything to me. I don't see why I ever did it. It was an innocent, unoffending post, and I never had anything against it—only this time. I have a faint recollection that I had my nose against it. I was sorry I had it there too. I only hope I did not loosen the post. [I have a peculiar feeling for that post—on dark nights especially.]

I then crossed the gutter without falling only once, and when once in the street I couldn't tell which way to run.

Everybody was running in every direction, as if the fire was everywhere, and as I knew that fire could not get along without me being there to look on, I started in both directions at once—as much as I could, at least, but only succeeded in going in one direction after all.

I started down street and would have made an hour and a quarter in a few minutes if I hadn't run against another fellow coming up in search of the fire. We sat there, rubbing each other's heads, for a while, and offering apologies, and when I turned another corner and the curbstone was a little too sharp for me, and didn't budge out of the way for my foot, I laid down to rest for a few minutes.

I apologized profanely to that curbstone, and then ran down that street for half a mile, yelling "fire," until a policeman checked me and said he would arrest me for disturbing what little peace there was in the neighborhood, and asked me who paid me for making that kind of a noise. He said I mustn't be so fiery—that the fire was over in the direction of somewhere else.

I started over in the direction he indicated, but thought I had made a mistake in the bearing, but I went on.

It isn't in me to stop hollering fire when I once get excited, so I didn't stop.

When I got out of the excitation they had made for a gas-pipe in the street, and swore I

would bring suit against the city for two or three broken legs, some necks, and a few arms. I went on feeling so well satisfied with the idea of future revenge that I didn't notice a horse and buggy standing in the street. I have the satisfaction of knowing that the owner had a little bill of repairing the next day to settle, but I was in search of the fire and couldn't stop long.

I think I turned more corners—some of them quite successfully—than any man ever did in search of a fire.

I came to be almost disgusted at it, and didn't care whether there was a fire or not, and so I quit yelling; and when some one told me it was a false alarm I walked toward home, computing on the way that I had run seven miles and a half, and afterward found I had left the front door open, and that many articles of value were missing in the morning.

Fires can do the best they can to get along without me, after this.

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN.

Topics of the Time.

—In answering a correspondent we allude to the hybernating habit of the bear. How the bear is able to live all winter without food is explained by a physiological fact that at the time of retiring to the den a remarkable phenomenon then takes place in the animal's digestive organs. The stomach, no longer supplied with food, contracts into a very small space. A mechanical obstruction called the "tappen," composed of fine leaves, or other extremely substances, blocks the alimentary canal, and prevents the outward passage of any matter. The bear continues in its den until the middle of April, in a dull, lethargic condition. If discovered and killed at any time in this period, it is found to be as fat as the beginning. It is said, however, that if it loses the "tappen" before the end of its hybernation, it immediately becomes extremely thin. During the hybernation the bear gains a new skin upon the balls of its feet, and during the same time, also, the female bears forth her young.

—Professor Walker, a Cincinnati scientist, has allowed himself to be stung once a day for three weeks by bees, to ascertain the effect. He says that after about the tenth time the pain and swelling were slight, the body seeming to become inoculated with the poison. It is remarkable how habitual use will fortify the body against poisons.

In the case of opium and arsenic eaters, such quantities are consumed daily, by each person, after the habit becomes fixed, as would kill at least a dozen persons unaccustomed to the drug or poison. Cases are known among arsenic eaters where over one hundred grains are taken at a time, with perfect immunity from harm. An ordinary dose of arsenic is one-sixteenth of a grain. Opium-eaters often take the drug in the liquid shape, laudanum. We have seen a man who swallowed regularly, twice a day, a wine-glassful of laudanum, pharmacopoeia strength! Dr. Quincy did this and lived to old age. So did Coleridge.

—Shall women be permitted to pass the hat or plate in churches, in order to lure more money out of unwilling givers? is the question in Rochester. The Democrat man, there, utters a plaintive and touching protest. "Granted," he says, "that it is one of her new-born privileges, and rights, we still must protest. It is in some measure a financial question. We are giving two-thirds of our salary to the churches now, and does a generous public want us to starve to death?" Of course the girls "let up" on him, and the rest of the male sex had to suffer for it, we dare say. When the custom travels east and pretty women pass the plate in our church, we shall go to giving promissory notes without any signature.

—Moody, the revivalist, now "awakening" Brooklyn, was the colonel of a Western regiment during the Secession War, and was called the "Fighting Parson." He was always on hand for a "scrimmage," but his regiment wasn't a success, and was consolidated, we believe, long before the war ended, with another command. The colonel then conceived the idea of making peace "on his own hook," so in company with Edmund Burke he went to Richmond, and had a long interview with Jeff Davis, and returned to Washington only to find that Uncle Abe didn't "see" the peace which the parson and the magazine writer had arranged. Moody is an earnest, honest, zealous worker, and means "business" when he undertakes anything.

—Somebody exclaims: "If every farmer would have a little flower-garden under his windows, or in sight of them, he has no idea how much dearer his home would become to him or how much more lively to others." Which is good, even for the fall of the year, for now is the time to transport a half-dozen pots of flowers to the sitting-room or kitchen window, to bloom and blossom all winter, and make one think, in the terribly cheerless January and February days, of the beautiful summer has in store. Flowers are a soul and mind inspiring in winter. Show us a home with a row of flower pots in the window, and we'll show you a sweet heart somewhere in that house, that feeds other hearts with something else than boiled potatoes and cabbage.

—Some remarkable observations have lately been made in regard to the heat of the human body. By means of an ingenious instrument recently invented by Dr. Lombard, of New York, it is ascertained that a woman's body is warmer than that of a man by about three-fourths of a degree, and sometimes as high as one-half a degree, while in no instance has the warmth of a male's body been found to be greater than that of a female. It is also definitely ascertained that children are decidedly warmer than adults, the difference being about one degree Fahrenheit, and that the younger the child the greater the diversity. A difference in the heat of the sides of the body is discovered to be an invariable law.

The left side of the head, and extending downward to the base of the neck, is much hotter than the right side. These curious facts open up to medical men a new line of research and inquiry.

—When the Sultan of Zanzibar was in England, a few weeks ago, on his visit to "the most civilized nation on the face of the earth," Sir John Lubbock, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was visiting to do something in the furtherance of gospel work in Africa, said to the Musselman:

"I trust your highness will not object to British missionaries having access to your dominions."

"Certainly not," the sultan replied. "I think that no obstacles should be placed in the way of so great an event as the English being brought to a knowledge of the true faith. Let them come, and—my learned men shall instruct them!" The sultan is a wit if he is a Mohammedan.

—The scientific men of California are now very busy over the evidences of a very ancient settlement of that country. It is gravely asserted that the remains of an old town, discovered near the present town of Cherokee, in that State, bear geological proof of having lain there for a period of at least one hundred and eighty thousand years. The evidences in question are numerous stone mortars, found in undisturbed white and yellow gravel of a subaqueous formation, not fluvial, underlying the vast sheets of volcanic rock of which Table Mountain is a part. In one instance a mortar was found standing upright, with the pestle in it, apparently just as it had been left by its owner. In some cases the mortars have been found at the depth of forty feet from the surface of the gravel underlying Table Mountain. The distribution of the mortars is such as to indicate with great positiveness the former existence of a human settlement on that ancient beach when the water stood near the level at which they occur: a time anterior to the volcanic outpouring which Table Mountain records, and anterior to the glacial epoch. Thus, little by little the record seems to go backward. Who can say where it will stop? But, after all, are they evidences in the true sense of the word?

Readers and Contributors.

To CORRESPONDENTS AND AUTHORS.—No MSS. received that are not fully prepaid in postage.—No MSS. preserved for future orders.—Unavailable MSS. promptly returned, only where stamps accompany the inclosure, for such return.—No correspondence of any nature is permissible in a package marked as "Book MSS."—MSS. which are imperfect are not used or wanted. In all cases our choice rests first upon merit or fitness; second, upon excellence of MSS. as "copy"; third, length. Of two MSS. of equal merit we always prefer the shorter.—Never write on both sides of a sheet. Use Commercial Note also paper as most convenient to editor and compositor, tearing off each page as it is written, and carefully filing all full or page number.—A rejection by us, please imply a want of merit. Many MSS. unsuitable to us are worth worthy of use.—All experienced and popular writers will find us ever ready to give their offerings early attention.—Contributors must look to this column for all information in regard to contributions. We can not write letters except in special cases.

Declined: "Glazier's Ghost," "Fire," "A Flash of Lightning," "A Letter's Double Mission," "A Speech," "Daddy Gunn," "The Chief's Promise," "Who Killed Jo Wing," "Out of Work," "A School-girl's Escape," "Old Specs," "A Complaint."

Accepted: "A Catastrophic Ditty," "Old Eyes in Young Heads," "The Song of Hearts," "Met and Meet," "A Thanksgiving Guest," "Miss Morris' Mistake," "Old Boys of the Ranche."

C. S. N. The "Spencerian" steel pens are not American, but of English make.

DUN BROWN. The law against lotteries is severe enough but is not enforced.

Mrs. DAN T. Longfellow is a widow. His wife was burned to death by her clothing taking fire. Whittier never married. He and a maiden sister keep house at Concord, N. H.

Mrs. R. S. E. Governor Ames, of Mississippi, married a daughter of General B. F. Butler—hence is related to the "great criminal lawyer."

P. W. B. We have no knowledge of the firm referred to. Send for their catalogue, if honest dealers that will probably show.

A. G. P. Do not care to have you try the series of lectures indicated. Have already a liberal supply of that class of material.

DELLA B. The N. Y. Eye and Ear Infirmary, we believe, has an excellent reputation. Its address is East Twelfth street, near Broadway.

G. H. VAN. Only three innings having been played all bats were out, and the game was "a draw." As to your other query, all we can say is to abjure nostrums and quacks as you would a plague. Lead a perfectly correct life; avoid all highly-seasoned food; keep regular hours; bathe daily, and all will be well with you.

INQUIRER (O. K. J.). To obtain a knowledge of the practical value of your talent, a term's attendance at the Cooper Institute Art School, New York, will be necessary. From that school designers, engravers and artists go out into all the avenues of employment to them, for there employers go for the service they need.

DAN EMMET, JR. The first artesian oil well was dug by Col. G. L. Drake, at Titusville, Oil Creek, Pa. On the 26th of August, 1859, he struck oil at a depth of 71 feet, and made 40 gallons per day. Now the total yield of all the American wells is about 7,000,000 barrels per annum. This is "crude oil." When refined, fit for use, it loses over one-half its volume.

JOSEPH TRAT. The bear hibernates through all the winter—that is, it takes no food and passes into a lethargic condition in its burrow in the ground or in the rocks, and during the winter months is very fat, and about the end of October, completing its winter-house, ceases feeding for the year, crawls into its carefully-prepared den, and is seen no more until the warm weather of spring calls it forth to activity again.

Mrs. B. T. D. All green tea need to be "drawn," not boiled. Black tea may be boiled from three to five minutes. It softens their coarse strength. Prof. Bloch's recipe for drawing tea is: "Put the vessel out just before using; put in the required quantity of tea; pour just enough water on it to saturate the leaf; let it stand about five minutes; then pour the water off, and add a fresh quantity of boiling hot water; if it is a China tea let it stand five minutes, but if a Japan tea it requires eight minutes. By following this method you will always have a good cup of tea." The professor, it will be seen, does not boil at all, but we have the authority of one of the best tea-makers we ever knew in saying that all black tea must be boiled to tone down their acrid strength and develop their peculiar flavor.

GEORGE NASON. The American Revolutionary war really began with the skirmish at Lexington, April 19th, 1775, and ended, we assume, at the peace of Cornwallis, at Yorktown, Va., Oct. 19th, 1781—six years and six months. Great Britain sent over to reconquer the rebellious colonies 33,000 soldiers and sailors. The "rebels" met them with 230,000 continental and 50,000 militia. The leading battles of the war, those particularly worthy of celebration, are Concord and Lexington, Bunker's Hill, Long Island, White Plains, Trenton, Princeton, Bennington, Saratoga, Springfield, King's Mountain, Cowpens, Gettysburg, Yorktown. These are of national interest.

WILL BURROUGHS wishes to know: "What will be an appropriate present for a young man to give a lady, with whom he is not at all acquainted, at her paper-wedding?" He asks, "What is the pleasure of a note-book, a subscription for a year to some nice journal or magazine—if you have any means of ascertaining her habits and preferences. Otherwise, you may as well give her a piece of pretty paper-mache ornament—a handkerchief, glove or perfume case, paper-cutter or weight, card-case or receiver, etc."

R. NETTIE MILLS, Elizabethport, asks: "Will you kindly tell me what more a bride and a stylish traveling dress (to be married in) for a bride, who is tall, slender and fair; and what hat and gloves to wear with it; and what shoes, and what a new suit, a ribbon and a wrapper, what they should be?" A very stylish traveling costume would be a slightly-trimmed undershirt of black-green or seal-green silk, (cashmere may be used instead), trimmed with the inevitable knife plackets; a long and elaborately draped overskirt, and plain overskirt basque, of *facon cendrillon*, in a shade of blue, with white silk, and a bow-tie, a handsome one, trimmed with the inevitable knife plackets; a long and elaborately draped overskirt, and plain overskirt basque, of *facon cendrillon*, in a shade of blue, with white silk, and a bow-tie, a handsome one, trimmed with the inevitable knife plackets; a long and elaborately draped overskirt, and plain overskirt basque, of *facon cendrillon*, in a shade of blue, with white silk, and a bow-tie, a handsome one, trimmed with the inevitable knife plackets; a long and elaborately draped overskirt, and plain overskirt basque, of *facon cendrillon</*

INSIDE AND OUT.

BY MARIE S. LADD.

A biting blast cut keen without.
We sat beside the blazing hearth.
And many a word of cheer and mirth
With repartee was thrown about.

Right pleasantly the fire lit
The oaken walls, and there portrayed
A shadow of the group, which swayed
As flame to flame was moving it.

"We are so happy," some one sighed,
"So much we have to make us glad."
Good cheer within, and warmth we had
While all was dark and chill outside.

And so in life these contrasts meet,
If bright for us fit on the hours,
For some sad soul the tempest lowers,
Time drags for them, for us 'tis fleet.

"In store for us the clouds may flout,"
So sighed the voice, "and cares begin,
To-night let's hold the good within,
And thus ignore the ill without."

Nick Whiffles' Pet:

NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PEACE-MAKER.

THE tidings that a company of trappers belonging to the North-West Fur Company was close at hand was indeed exciting; but when it was learned that they numbered forty men, and that they had fired at the two hunters, the instant they recognized them, the news was indeed alarming.

There was no doubting the disposition of these men; the rivalry at the time of which I am speaking was so great between the agents of these two great companies, who both claimed Oregon Territory as their own trapping-ground, that more than one collision had occurred in that country, and there was always imminent danger when two of their parties encountered.

The two hunters stated that they had brought down a buffalo, that, badly wounded as it was, managed to run to the bank of the river, where it fell dead. They hurried forward, and were on the point of applying their knives to the animal, when a shout caused them to look up, and they saw three large canoes, scarcely a hundred yards distant.

It required but a moment for them to see that they were North-westers, who showed they were equally quick in identifying them, by sending several shots after them, accompanying the same with insulting epithets.

The men instantly took to their heels, and here they were.

"Did you fire at them?" asked Mackintosh.

"No; we left in rather too much of a hurry."

"I am glad of that; I don't wish to have a fight with them, and they can't say we have given them the provocation."

"We've give 'em the biggest kind," said Nick Whiffles, "and if you ain't mighty keener, there's going to be the condemnedest difficulty you ever heard tell on. Turn the heads of the canoes t'other way!"

This was uttered in such a peremptory tone that a number of men sprang forward and obeyed it.

"If they find out we've been down to the village and got the peltries they're after," remarked Nick, in explanation to Mackintosh, "they'll be in fur a difficulty sure as you're born. The idee is to make things look as though we war goin' down instead of up-stream."

There was barely time to explain this ruse to the men, when the three canoes made their appearance. Catching sight of the men on shore, a volume of shouts arose, that made Mackintosh tremble for the result.

"Let me do all the talking," said he to his men, "and avoid anything that will provoke them."

The boats headed for the landing, and in a few seconds the three ranged themselves alongside the shore and rested on their oars.

In the three boats were forty men—mostly Americans, although here and there a sprinkling of other nationalities could be discovered. They were a tough, courageous-looking set of men, dangerous to any sort of foe.

The leader or director of the expedition was a long-whiskered Missourian, who sat in the stern of one of the boats, smoking a large meerschaum pipe.

"Good-day to you," said Mackintosh, advancing to the edge of the water, and nodding pleasantly to this individual, whose reply came in a gruff voice.

"What the deuce are you doing in Oregon?"

"Hunting for furs."

"I should think it's about time you infernal Hudson Bay men learned that this country belongs to the universal Yankee nation."

"That question is not yet settled," replied Mackintosh; "we trapped in Oregon a hundred years before the North-west Fur Company was formed."

"Just because we let you—that's the only reason."

"There are treaties in existence giving us the privilege."

"Let's see them!" was the characteristic demand of the Missourian, starting up in indignation.

"I am not in the habit of carrying treaties around in my breeches pocket. I have seen the treaty; but your government and mine are now negotiating about this very thing, and until a decision is reached, I claim that my right is as good as yours to hunt and trap in all of Oregon."

"And I'll make affidavit it isn't; haven't you heard the news?"

"No; what is it?"

"The treaty has been concluded; Oregon is ceded to us, with the understanding that at the end of ten years, all of British America, Russian America and Greenland are to be annexed to the United States, and I, Jake Belgrade, am to be appointed territorial Governor."

If Mr. Belgrade, of Missouri, had not drawn it quite so strong, possibly he might have succeeded in making some impression upon the matter-of-fact Scotchman, but the latter merely smiled, and replied:

"I haven't received official notice of it yet; when I do, it will be obeyed."

"We have," was the remark of the Missourian, "and we've come to Oregon for two things—one is to hunt furs, and the other to clear all you infernal Hudson Bay men out. What do you say, boys?"

"Ay! ay!" was the deep-mouthed response of the men, eager for anything that promised the excitement of an affray.

"So if you chaps don't want to get eternally nipped out, you'd better git up and git, in about three shakes of a lamb's tail."

"I am a subject of Her Majesty and I take no orders from any one except from her officers, my superiors."

"We've flaxed you Britishers more than once, and we can do it again."

Mackintosh fancied that he had his temper under full control, but he was not proof against the exasperating manner of the Missourian, and, if any one thing was certain at this point, it was that, unless some third party interfered, there would be a bloody and desperate encounter between the men, within the next ten minutes.

Nick Whiffles plainly saw this, and stepped forward at the critical moment.

"Mack, if you'll allow," said he, addressing the Scotchman, "I'll put in a word or two—"

At this juncture, the North-west men recognized the old hunter and all cheered him. Every one knew him either personally or by reputation, and they respected and admired him.

Mackintosh comprehended the delicate situation, and with a graceful bow, stepped back, and made way for his friend.

Nick, with his long rifle in one hand, with Calamity at his side, and with his huge grin on his face, looked serenely toward the North-westers.

"What do you chaps want?"

"We want them Britishers to vamose the ranche," replied Belgrade.

"Wal, ain't they doin' it, as fast as they can?"

"That don't look much like it," said the Missourian, pointing to the canoes; "your boats are headed down-stream; that ain't the way to get out of Oregon."

"Ain't you willin' that they should go down the river and get some peltries of the Blackfeet?"

"Not much; that's just what we're after, and we intend to manage that business ourselves."

"S'pose, then, I kin persuade 'em to turn about and go up-stream, there'll be no difficulty?"

"Being it's you that has asked it, Nick, there won't be—but, we come into Oregon with our minds made up to shoot every Hudson Bay thief we found in the place; this thing

find that we've been there," said Mackintosh, "I wonder if any of the company will be able to do justice to their feelings."

"I s'pose the part I played come as near lying as anything could," said Nick, "but I didn't see any other way of getting you out of the condemned difficulty."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BOY TRAPPER AND THE DAWNING OF LOVE.

THE Hudson Bay men resumed their journey up the Elk river, paddling with scarcely any intermission until nightfall, when, as usual, they halted up for the purpose of encamping.

Around the camp-fire passed story and jest until a late hour, when all, excepting the usual sentinels, turned in for the night, and at an early hour the brigade was under way again.

At noon the river made a sweeping bend toward the north, which, followed up a few miles further, would lead them into unmistakable British territory, where there was no danger of molestation from any members of the great rival fur company.

At this point, Nick Whiffles and Ned Hazel left the company. They had made the nearest point to his home, and henceforth would only draw further away from it. The parting was pleasant, and marked by good feeling upon both sides, but there was nothing of a pathetic character in it, as they expected to meet again in a few weeks at the furthest.

Nick and the boy stood on the shore, waving farewells to them, until around one of the many turns in the river they disappeared from view, when the two friends turned about, and plunging into the wilderness, set out for home.

The point at which they had left Shagbark, the horse, was several miles distant and out of their course; so Nick turned the duty over to Calamity.

"You know where we left him, pup," said he, addressing the canine; "go, fetch him back."

derings, he had always looked back to as his home. True, he was often absent for weeks and months, sometimes away up among the frozen regions along James Bay, and then far down toward the head-waters of the Red River of the North; but always, when he spoke of returning home, this was the place he meant.

It was constructed with some little skill. It had been built where two immense rocks made a right-angle, so that two of its sides were impenetrable stone; the rest was made of logs and bark, with a sloping roof to shed the rain, and an opening, with an immense bear-skin, to serve as a door, which, when necessary, could be closed by a rock.

Within this lived Nick Whiffles and Ned Hazel. They had spent many happy years here, and hoped to spend many more.

Near by was a rough but secure shelter for Shagbark, where, when he chose, he could seek refuge from the storm. Calamity, as a matter of course, claimed the cabin as his headquarters.

The house was not very attractive from the outside, but a good deal of comfort had been found there, not by Nick alone, but by many wanderers, both white and red, through this great wilderness of the North-west.

Having slain and skinned his beavers, Nick set about preparing supper for himself and Ned from the tails of the animals. These, when carefully cooked, afforded a delicious and nourishing food, and are highly prized by the trappers who spend so much of their lives in these distant regions.

Calamity and Shagbark returned in the course of an hour. Both looked sleek and happy, and the tough, long-haired pony showed no little delight at being petted and caressed by his master. He had enjoyed a good play-spell, and was given liberty to continue it indefinitely, as there was no telling when his owner would start on his travels again.

The meat cooking, Nick Whiffles took down his long-barreled rifle, and seating himself by the door, began to take it apart and clean it,

According to the eternal fitness of things, the girl was the first to speak.

"I let the beaver go, because it was suffering so much that I pitied it; you are not angry, are you?"

"Oh! no—no," stammered Ned, not a little embarrassed; "I wouldn't care if you let all the beavers in the country loose."

"I wouldn't do that, because all the beavers ain't caught," replied the girl, with a laugh; "but it cried just like you would, if a bear should catch you."

"How do you know I would cry?" demanded Ned, feeling a boyish resistance to being considered such a child as all that. "If a bear should catch me I would turn about and fight him."

"Not if he had you fast so that you couldn't move hand or foot," persisted the young miss; "this poor beaver was hurt, too; it almost made me cry to see it."

Ned felt as though he would cry, too, if it would be any satisfaction to this young lady; but, as it was, he would much prefer to be considered a man in her presence; so he straightened himself up and looked as tall as possible, as he continued:

"You don't know how you startled me when you spoke."

"Yes I do for I saw you jump, and it made me laugh. You ain't afraid of me, are you?"

"You don't look as though you would hurt anybody."

"What is your name?"

"Ned Hazel."

"That is a pretty name; I suppose they called you that because your eyes are such a pretty hazel color. Do you want to know my name?"

"I do, indeed," replied the lad, blushing to his eyes.

"It is Miona, and I live among the Indians."

"All alone?"

"Why, no, of course not; haven't you ever seen my mother? She and I dress in white, and sometimes I go with her in her canoe at night."

"What!" exclaimed Ned Hazel, "are you the daughter of the Phantom Princess?"

"I don't know who you mean by that, but I am the daughter of my mother, and I promised to return to her; so good-by, Ned Hazel."

"Good-by—you—you—angel!" stammered the blushing Ned, as the little fairy tripped away.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SONG OF THE SIREN.

YOUNG Ned Hazel stood for a few minutes gazing at the point in the wood where the wonderful girl, Miona, had vanished.

Then, yielding to a strange impulse, he dashed headlong after her, not knowing really why he did so. The glimmering of a new emotion was in his heart, and he felt impelled by a desire to see and speak to her again. He was just of that age when the delight of young love was the sweetest, and the romantic, joyful feeling seemed to take entire possession of him.

And then, she was the daughter of the wonderful Phantom Princess about whom he had heard so much and so often, and who was enveloped in such a strange mystery!

But, rapidly as he moved, he was too slow to overtake the girl, who flitted like a fawn through the wood. Reaching the edge of Elk river he saw nothing of her. She had disappeared as entirely as did her mother a few nights before, when pursued by Mackintosh and his trappers.

For fully half an hour he stood on the shore, gazing wistfully up and down-stream, but in vain, and, with a sigh, he gave up the search as fruitless.

"Perhaps I shall see her again," he concluded; "at any rate I'll set the trap, and if it catches a beaver, she will come and let him out, and I will get another chance to see and talk with her."

The afternoon was well gone, and he knew that Nick would be expecting him, so he concluded to take another look up and down the river and then to make all haste home.

The glance which he cast up-stream showed him a small canoe descending, and in it was seated a single person, managing the paddle with a deliberation which proved that whatever might be his destination he was in no great hurry to reach it.

"Some trapper going it alone," concluded Ned, as he still lingered and watched.

Yielding to a feeling of caution, which his experience in the woods had taught him, he stepped back, so as to be invisible to the stranger himself. It was barely possible that he might be an enemy, and his prudence could not come amiss under any circumstances.

As the figure came closer and closer, something in its appearance struck Ned as familiar. He scanned it more closely and suddenly understood matters.

It was Bandman!

What could he be doing here?

"I suppose he's going on some errand for Mackintosh," concluded Ned, as he turned on his heel and started homeward.

He did not forget to pause and reset the trap, which had been disturbed by Miona, with the fervent wish that she would make it another visit, just about the time he would reach the ground.

And then, as he resumed his homeward walk, another conviction made itself known. While talking with the girl, something in her face seemed familiar. It was only the faintest, most shadowy resemblance to something that he had met somewhere before. Whether it was away back in that dim period preceding his own advent into this solitude, or whether it had visited him in his dreams, he could not say; but he clung to the belief that it was no fancy of his; and speculating and unable to solve what it meant, he finally reached home, where old Nick was just beginning to wonder at his prolonged delay.

But what meant this canoe voyage of Hugh Bandman?

My reader has probably suspected what it meant.

A few hours after the separation of Nick Whiffles from the Hudson Bay trappers, a party of friendly Indians had been encountered, who had a few furs to sell. A halt was made and a barter effected.

Among the purchases effected, was a small canoe, which was turned over to Hugh Bandman, with the cautious remark that he might use it whenever he chose.

He chose to do so at once.

"I may as well begin this business without any further delay," said he, as he stepped within and took the paddle.

A few words were interchanged and then the parties separated. The Indians of whom the boat had been purchased remained on shore, so that Bandman descended the stream again without any company at all.

He saw nothing of Ned Hazel, and passed directly by him without suspecting his presence or proximity.



Turning at once he fairly gasped at the vision he saw.

has gone too far already, and we cracked away at 'em the minute we got sight of a couple of them up the river a little while ago."

"Keep easy there," said Nick, "till I can speak a word or two to Mack here."

Whiffles turned about and began conversing with Mackintosh in a low, earnest voice, occasionally indulging in quite excited gestures, while the members of both parties watched the two men with no little interest.

The interview lasted but a short time, when Nick turned to Belgrade.

"It goes rather ag'in in the grain to knuckle under in this 'ere style—if I was the man there'd be a condemnedest difficulty afore I'd pull down my flag."

"What does he say?" inquired the Missourian.

"That's what he says," was the reply, as the hunter pointed to a half-dozen men who were busying themselves in turning the canoes so as to head up-stream; "Mack, however, says he reserves the right to protest ag'in this proceeding."

"Protest and be hanged," replied Belgrade.

"Oregon is a part of the United States, and no infernal red-coat has any right on it, without first asking permission of Uncle Sam, and if this thing isn't stopped, there's going to be war. I'm going to stir up Congress when I get back, and get 'em to notify the Hudson Bay Company that if they don't stop fooling and keep off our land, we'll bombard London, and capture her and her whole caboodle of a family and hold 'em for hostages. I reckon that'll bring 'em to their senses."

And with this grandiloquent flourish, Mr. Belgrade gave the signal for his men to resume their course down-stream; but they had taken scarcely a dozen strokes, when he gave his parting shot.

"We'll watch for you, and if you undertake to steal by, we'll shoot every one of you, in spite of Nick Whiffles."

The Hudson Bay men preserved their solemnity of mien, until their rivals were beyond sight, when they indulged in some rather broad smiles at their success in outwitting them.

"When they get down to the village and

Ned Hazel himself did not understand this message any better than did the remarkable dog, who, with a pleased wag of his tail, galloped away in the direction of the faithful animal.

"He'll be at the cabin with him as soon as we," said the trapper, as the two turned about and resumed their journey through the woods.

Although the spring had fairly opened, the trapping season was not finished. The fur-bearing animals were still covered with heavy, valuable hides, which were eagerly sought after by the trappers. Nick Whiffles was still engaged in the business, and on starting for Fort William, he had left the matter in charge of Ned, who, having followed him down the river, made him the more anxious to return and ascertain his luck.

"There were good signs of beaver when I set them last two traps," remarked Nick to the boy, as they walked along; "and if I ain't mistook most mighty, there will be some fur found in 'em, when we git back."

They were yet a mile or two from their cabin, when they turned off to the left, and finally reached a creek that came down from a chain of mountains some miles away.

Along this water the experienced eye of the trapper saw many signs of beavers, to which he directed the attention of the boy walking beside him. Where the indications were not readily perceived, he took as much care to explain them to him as though he were a paid instructor for teaching him the "profession" of trapping.

"Now, lad," said the old trapper, as he looked down benignantly upon the boy, "you've spent a good number of years a-trampin' with me, and I reckon you've larned a powerful sight more nor I knowed at your age; so I'll let you go up this creek, and look after the upper trap, while I tend to the others."

So they separated. Nick made the round of his traps, and was delighted at his good fortune, for in all, excepting one, he found a prize. The beavers all cried piteously when they saw him coming, but he speedily ended their sufferings, and slinging them over his shoulder, leisurely made his way to his cabin.

The afternoon was about half gone when he reached the building that, during all his wan-

dering, he had always looked back to as his home. True, he was often absent for weeks and months, sometimes away up among the frozen regions along James Bay, and then far down toward the head-waters of the Red River of the North; but always, when he spoke of returning home, this was the place he meant.

It was constructed with some little skill. It had been built where two immense rocks made a right-angle, so that two of its sides were impenetrable stone; the rest was made of logs and bark, with a sloping roof to shed the rain, and an opening, with an immense bear-skin, to serve as a door, which, when necessary, could be closed by a rock.

Within this lived Nick Whiffles and Ned Hazel. They had spent many happy years here, and hoped to spend many more.

Near by was a rough but secure shelter for Shagbark, where, when he chose, he could seek refuge from the storm. Calamity, as a matter of course, claimed the cabin as his headquarters.

The house was not very attractive from the outside, but a good deal of comfort had been found there, not by Nick alone, but by many wanderers, both white and red, through this great wilderness of the North-west.

Having slain and skinned his beavers, Nick set about preparing supper for himself and Ned from the tails of the animals. These, when carefully cooked, afforded a delicious and nourishing food, and are highly prized by the trappers who spend so much of their lives in these distant regions.

Calamity and Shagbark returned in the course of an hour. Both looked sleek and happy, and the tough, long-haired pony showed no little delight at being petted and caressed by his master. He had enjoyed a good play-spell, and was given liberty to continue it indefinitely, as there was no telling when his owner would start on his travels again.

The meat cooking, Nick Whiffles took down his long-barreled rifle, and seating himself by the door, began to take it apart and clean it,

derings, he had always looked back to as his home. True, he was often absent for weeks and months, sometimes away up among the frozen regions along James Bay, and then far down toward the head-waters of the Red River of the North; but always, when he spoke of returning home, this was the place he meant.

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"Shall I be able to solve this mystery?" asked the lonely trapper, as he thoughtfully plied his paddle. "Can it be that Mackintosh suspects? No—impossible!"

He was pale and his lips compressed, as though agitated by some strong emotion, and now and then he gave utterance to his troubled thoughts.

"It may be—the date—there are several things—but no, such a thing was never heard of in the wildest romance—but I shall never return from this expedition until I have learned."

Hist! what was that?

His heart gave a great bound, and he held the paddle motionless in his hand and scarcely breathed.

While he leaned forward, he saw in the distance, gliding close to shore, what had met his vision twice before. It was the Phantom Princess in her white canoe!

The boat was so white that at first glimpse it seemed like some strange bird hunting its way back again to its home, deep in the primeval wilderness, but as he looked, he could discern the form of the princess herself seated in it.

Her daughter, dressed in her faultily colored dress, was reclining in the bow, but she was so concealed by the intervening figure of her mother that the trapper saw nothing of her.

"It is she—it is she!" muttered Bandman, "and she must see me. I will follow her."

He paddled more vigorously, in the hope that she would permit him to approach or overtake her; but he was not long in learning that it was her wish that their relative distance should be maintained for the present at least; so he ceased his efforts and followed her more leisurely.

Before he was aware, night was upon him, and he discovered that he was following her by moonlight—a bright, clear moonlight, that served almost as well as the day, inasmuch as she avoided the shadow of the shore, and kept as near the middle of the stream as possible.

Bandman scarcely removed his eyes from her; his great fear was that she might take it into her head to whisk as suddenly out of sight as she did when pursued by the trappers.

He found that, with the coming of night, she permitted him to approach considerably closer to her canoe. Indeed, scarcely more than a hundred yards separated them, and had she chose, they could have easily conversed in an ordinary tone.

Bandman made several attempts to lessen the distance, but he saw that it rested entirely with her, and she governed her progress entirely by his.

A couple of hours were passed, thus—although the trapper was not conscious of the lapse of time—when he became conscious that the Phantom Princess was singing.

Singing, it is true, in a low, faint voice—but in tones of irrepressible sweetness.

She was uttering no words, but rather humming some plaintive air, that came to the ears like the sad, touching strains of the wind-harp.

The trapper ceased rowing and bent his head to listen. It came to his ears, like the tones that visit us in our dreams of angels, and, as he sat motionless, he felt then more than ever before, that there must be something supernatural about this wonderful being whom he was following with such a resolution.

He looked up to see whether she was still paddling away from him. No; she, too, was resting on her oars, and both were floating with the current. He was drifting away more in a dream than in his waking senses.

The voice never rose above that faint, tremulous, touchingly sweet tone, that seemed to penetrate his very being.

Hark! Why does he gasp and start? Surely he has heard that strain before! Yes; long years ago it had melted his heart with tenderness, and now it fairly drove him wild.

"I will overtake you! I can stand this no longer!"

And seizing his oar, he rows with a furious energy such as he has never known before.

And is there no hand raised to stay him? Ah! no, and he is surely rushing upon his doom, lulled thither by the song of the siren!

(To be continued—commenced in No. 295.)

Erminie:

OR, THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AWFUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.—CONTINUED.

"My door's clean, Miss Pet, I'd have you for to know, hand wouldn't dirty hannybody's things!" answered Miss Priscilla, sharply, and with flashing eyes; "but them thore things hof your'n musses hit hup, which his something I never likes my room to be, being neat myself, a slavin', and tollin', and strivin' to keep things to rights from morning till night, with poople a-pitchin' hof things round huntill hit looks like a 'og-stye. Wahi wahi!"

And Miss Priscilla got up and picked up all Pet's garments, and carried them up to her own bedroom, out of the way.

And then Pet, with her diabolical spirit of mischief uppermost, went flying through the house, opening, shutting, slamming and banging the doors, in a way that drove the peace-loving spinster to the verge of madness, and made her sour temper ten degrees sorer, until her very look would have turned treacle to vinegar. In and out, up and down-stairs, getting astride of the banisters and sliding down, at the imminent danger of breaking her neck, ransacking every room, and turning everything topsy-turvy and up-side-down, and "mussing things" generally, until Miss Priscilla Toosytops "vowed a vow" in her secret heart that the next time she saw Miss Petronilla Lawless coming, she would lock every door in the house, and send Cupid out with his "blunderbuss" to shoot her, rather than let her ever darken her doors again.

Dinner at length was announced, and Miss Priscilla began to breathe freely again, in the hope of at least a few moments' respite from her tormentor. As Pet entered the sitting-room—for Miss Toosytops dined in her sitting-room—her thin, dark, bright face all aglow with fun and frolic; her black eyes dancing and sparkling with insufferable light; her short, crisp, black curls all tangled and damp over her shoulders and round, polished, saucy, boyish forehead, she looked the very embodiment, the very incarnation of mischief, and mirth. She looked like a little grenade, all jets and sparkles—a little barrel of gunpowder, at any moment ready to explode—a wild, untamed little animal, very beautiful, but very dangerous.

And there, at the head of the table, the greatest contrast to her dark, bright, fiery little neighbor that could well be found, sat Miss Toosytops, as prim, stiff and upright as if she

had swallowed a ramrod—as sour, sharp and acid as if she had been spoon-fed on verjuice from infancy upward.

Pet's eyes went dancing over the table to examine the bill of fare. Now, reader, our Pet was not a gourmand, nor yet an epicure, by any means—what she got to eat was very little trouble to her, indeed; but she knew Miss Priscilla was intensely miserly, and, having plenty, begrudged every mouthful eaten at her board. Therefore, the wicked little elf determined to give her a slight idea of what she could do in the eating-line when provoked to it.

But, alas! little was there on that table to provoke the appetite. Two cups of pale, sickly-looking tea, a plate with four small, dropical-looking potatoes, a consumptive red-herring, and, by way of dessert, a pigeon-pie. That was all.

Pet's face fell to a formidable length for an instant; then, a bright idea struck her, and she inwardly exclaimed, as she saw Miss Priscilla's eyes rest lovingly on the pigeon-pie:

"Pet, child, you'll be starved, you know, if you don't look out, before you get home. It's your duty to show Miss Priscilla what she owes to her guests; so you walk right into that pigeon-pie, and eat every morsel of it, though you should burst!"

"Sit down, Miss Pet," said Miss Priscilla, solemnly, pointing to her chair, and holding her knife and fork threateningly over the ghostly-looking red-herring, "for what we are about to receive. Which do you like best, the head or the tail, Miss Pet?—take your choice."

"Thank you, Miss Priscilla; for I don't care for either—I ain't fond of fish. I guess I'll take this."

And Pet coolly leaned over, took the pie, and commenced vigorously cutting it up.

"I always make myself at home here, Miss Priscilla," said Pet, speaking with her mouth full. "I know you ain't fond of dainties; and nobody has such nice pigeon-pies as you have. You made it on purpose for me—didn't you? I told you not to put yourself to any trouble on my account; but you would, you know. It's real nice, Miss Priscilla; and I'd ask you to have some, only I know you don't care about it."

And all this time Pet had been crunching away, half choking herself in her haste.

And Miss Priscilla! What pen shall describe her feelings when she saw that cherished pigeon-pie making for which she had been deliberating about for a week before—that pigeon-pie, which had been uppermost in her mind all morning, vanishing before her eyes with such frightful rapidity! The English language is weak, is utterly powerless to describe how she felt. There she sat, as if turned to stone, her knife and fork still poised over the herring, speechless with horror and amazement, her eyes frozen to the face of Pet, while still her cherished pigeon-pie kept disappearing like mist before the morning sun.

"Do take your dinner, Miss Priscilla. Why, you ain't eating anything, hardly," said the wicked little wretch, as her fork went up and down from her plate to her mouth with the nearest approach to perpetual motion the horrified spinster had ever seen. "Just see how I'm getting along. This pie is really beautiful, Miss Priscilla. Oh! I love pigeon-pie; and only I know you'd rather see me eat it, I'd make you have a piece. There! I've finished!" said Pet, pushing aside the empty plate, and leaning back in her chair in a state almost "too full for utterance." "Oh, that pigeon-pie was—was—actually divine! It just was, Miss Priscilla; and I'd come to see you every day if you'd only make me one like that."

Without a word, but with a look that might have turned scarlet any face less hard than that of the wicked little elf, Miss Priscilla began her dinner. Nothing daunted, Pet sat and talked away unceasingly, but never a word came from the pink-lips of Miss Priscilla Toosytops. Then, when the slender repast was over, Aunt Bob was called up from the lower regions to clear away the service; and Pet sat in her chair, feeling it inconvenient to do anything but talk, just then; and talk she did, with a right good will, for mortal hours; and still Miss Priscilla sat knitting and knitting away, and speaking never a word.

"The cross, cantankerous, sharp-nosed old thing!" muttered Pet, at last, getting tired of this unprofitable occupation. "The stingy old miser! to sit there sulking because I ate the only thing fit to eat on the table. I declare! If I haven't a good mind to come every day and do the same, just for her ugliness! Oh, yav-w-w! how sleepy I am! I guess I've done all the mischief I can do, just now."

I'll go to sleep. I'd go home, only I said I wouldn't go till dark, and I won't, either! So now, Pet, child, you drop into the 'arms of Murphy,' as Ranty says, as fast as you like."

And curling herself up in her chair, with her head pillowed on her arm, Pet, in five minutes, was sound asleep.

From her slumbers she was awake by a vigorous shake, given by no gentle hand. Pet started up, rubbed her eyes, and beheld Miss Priscilla, by the light of a lamp she carried, bending over her.

"I'm a-going to bed, Miss Lawless," said Miss Priscilla, grimly; "hand unless you intends staying all night—which I shouldn't be hany surprised at hif you was—hif's time you was a-going 'ome."

"Why, how late is it?" exclaimed Pet, jumping to her feet.

"Height o'clock, hand as dark as a wolf's mouth, hat that."

"My stars! And isn't tea ready yet, Miss Priscilla?"

"I've 'ad my tea a' hour ago," said Miss Priscilla, with a grim sort of smile. "You was so sound haslept I didn't care about wakening hof you, not to speak hof 'aving heat so much for your dinner, I didn't think you'd care for hany tea. 'Ere's your things, Miss Pet, and your 'oss is at the door; but you can stay hant night, hif you like."

"I won't stay all night! I'll never come here again—yes I will, too! I'll come every single day—see if I don't!" exclaimed Pet, bounding across the room, and giving her hat a slap on her head. "I know you don't want me, and I'll just come! If you was to our house, do you think I'd pack you off without any tea? No, I wouldn't, if I had to boil the tea-leaves we used the last time for it! It just shows the sort of folks Englishers are, and I wish there wasn't one in the world—I just do; and I don't care who hears me saying it. I'm a-going, Miss Priscilla, and I vow to Sam! I'll be back to-morrow, and the next day, and the next—see if I don't!"

And while scolding furiously, and flinging things about in a manner perfectly awful to so neat a housekeeper as the ancient spinster, Miss Petronilla had managed to dress herself and descend the stairs, while Miss Priscilla, grim as a cast-iron statue, stood at the head,

holding the light. Pet flounced out of the hall, giving the door a terrific bang behind her, and stepped out into the night.

By the light that streamed from the glass top of the door, Pet saw Cupid holding her pony. Springing lightly on his back, she gathered up the reins, and paused a moment before starting to look around.

The night was pitch dark, still, and sultry. Not a breath of air moved, not a leaf rustled; but from the inky pal of deepest gloom overhead, short, fitful flashes of lightning at intervals blazed. A storm was at hand, and would soon burst.

"For de Lor's sake! hurry, Miss Petronilla," said Cupid, in a frightened whisper. "Dar's de awfulest storm a-comin' to-night you ever seed." Miss "Silly" oughtn't 'lived you to go froo de woods to-night."

"Miss 'Silly, indeed! I guess she hopes I may only get my neck broke before I get home," said Pet, shortly, as she turned her pony's head in the direction of the bridge-path leading through the gorge.

The sure-footed steed, left to himself, securely trod the narrow path, and entered, at last, upon the forest road. Having nothing else to do, Pet began ruminating.

"If that ain't what I call mean!" she indignantly muttered; "sending me off like an Arab, without anything to eat. The hateful, stingy old thing! I like that soft, green, good-natured Orlando, but I can't bear her. 'Sh-h-h! softly, Starlight, my boy! there's niggers in these woods, you know, who wouldn't mind chawing you and me right up."

Even while she spoke, a hand grasped her bridle-rein, and a deep, stern voice cried:

"Stop!" At the same moment there came a vivid flash of lightning, and Pet beheld, for a second, the face of a negro black as a demon. The next instant all was deepest darkness again.

CHAPTER XIX.

PLAYING WITH EDGED TOOLS.

"Thinkest thou there dwells no courage but in breasts That set their mail against the ringing spears When helmets are struck down? Thou little knowest Of Nature's marvels,"—MRS. HEMANS.

Miss Petronilla Lawless was an exceedingly precocious, an exceedingly courageous, and an exceedingly self-possessed young lady, as our readers are aware, yet now her brave heart for a moment seemed to die within her, and a terrified shriek arose and was barely suppressed on her lips. The hour, the scene, the darkness, the danger, might have made an older and a stronger person quail. Alone in the woods, where no scream for help could be heard, with the gloom of Hades all around, save when the blue blaze of the heat-lighting flashed for a moment through the darkness, helpless and alone, in the power of a fierce, blood-thirsty negro. For one instant, a deadly inclination to swoon came over her; but the next, "coward and boaster," as she heard the words from Ranty's lips, came borne to her ear, nerving her heart with new courage and her childish arms with new strength.

"Am I a coward and boaster, as he said?" she mentally exclaimed, while her eye lit fiercely up. "Yes, I am, if I scream and faint; so I won't do either. It wasn't for nothing I learned to shoot and carry pistols about, and Ranty won't call me a coward again, if I die for it!"

All these thoughts had passed through her mind in half an instant, and now the dauntless little amazon sat erect on her horse, and one little brown hand dropped to the pistol she carried in her belt.

The black, meanwhile, had held her rearing steed firmly by the bridle-rein.

"Come, get off with you!" said the negro, gruffly. "I'll look after you for a few days, Miss Pet. Come; I've got a place all ready for you in here."

Now, Pet was too young and guileless to fear worse fate than robbery, imprisonment, or, perhaps, death; but as the negro attempted to pass one arm around her waist and lift her from her saddle, her face blanched with horror and loathing, and shrinking back she shrieked:

"Let me go—let me go, I tell you! I'll kill you if you don't let me go!"

"Oh come, now, missy—none o' this. Little kittens spit and snap, but we ain't afraid of 'em. You've got to come; so you may as well come at once."

"Lift her off, and carry her 'long. No use a standin' foolin' here!" said another deep, guttural voice.

"Let me alone! I tell you let me alone! I'll murder you, if you don't!" screamed Pet, passionately, her finger closing hard on the trigger.

"Oh, I'm getting tired of this yer!" exclaimed the black, as he resigned the horse to his companion.

And, going over to Pet, he flung his arm around her and attempted to lift her from her saddle.

A flash of lightning at that instant revealed the black, shining visage plainly to Pet as his face was upraised to hers.

Her teeth were clenched hard, her pistol was raised, one swift, short prayer for help, and the brave little amazon fired!

A loud cry, that arose even above the sharp report, burst from the lips of him who held the horse, as he let go the reins and sprang toward his wounded companion.

The frightened Arabian, the moment he felt himself released, bounded madly away, and in five minutes Pet was beyond danger.

The cottage on the Barrens was the nearest habitation; but all was dark there, and the family had evidently retired to rest.

While Pet paused to deliberate a moment whether she would rouse them up or ride home to Heath Hill, she chanced to turn her eyes in the direction of the White Squall—as the old sailor, Admiral Havenful, had named his huge white palace of painted wood—and perceived a long line of red light streaming from one of the windows far over the dry level moor.

"Uncle Harry's up yet!" exclaimed Pet. "I'll go there, and stay all night. Gee up, Starlight! You have carried me out of danger once to-night; just take me to 'Old Harry's,' as Deb says, and then you may put your head under your wing and go to sleep as fast as you like."

As if he had understood her, her fleet steed bounded furiously over the heath; and five minutes later, Pet was standing knocking away with the butt-end of her whip on the door, loud enough to waken the dead.

The terrific thumping brought three or four servants scampering to the door; and close at their heels, holding a bedroom candlestick high over her head, came the "grand seigneur" of the household, himself looking slightly bewildered at this attempt to board him by force.

"Law! if it ain't Miss Pet!" ejaculated the man who admitted her. "Might 'a' known 'twas she; nobody else would come thumpin' like dat. Fit to 'ar de ruff off!"

"Don't be afraid, Uncle Harry; it's only

me!" said Pet, as she came in, dispersing the darkeys by a grand flourish of her whip.

"Fort your helm!" exclaimed the admiral, still slightly bewildered, as he held the candlestick aloft and stared at Pet with all his eyes.

"Well, how can I port my helm out here, I want to know?" cried Pet, testily. "Look at these niggers, gaping as if I had two heads on me, and you, standing staring at me, with that old candlestick over your head, that's got no candle in it. Here! go along with you! Be off with you!"

And again Pet flourished her whip among them, in a way that had the effect of speedily sending them flying to the kitchen regions, while she gave her passive uncle a push that sent him into the parlor from which he had just emerged.

This done, Pet followed him, shut the door with a bang, flung her whip across the room, and dropped, with a long, deep breath of relief and security, into an arm-chair.

The admiral sunk into another, still holding the candlestick in his hand, and never removing his eyes from her face. Thus they sat for some minutes, she gazing on the floor, he gazing in helpless bewilderment on her; and while they are thus engaged, we will take the liberty of glancing round the parlor of the White Squall.

Like the sitting-room of Miss Priscilla Toosytops, there was a "plaintful scarcity" of the ornamental, and, unlike hers, a great preponderance of the useless. The floor was covered by a thick, dark carpet; the windows were shaded by blue-paper blinds; the walls were as white as the largest possible amount of whitewash could make them, and adorned by pencil draughts of ships, brigs, schooners, corvettes, and every other kind of vessel that ever delighted the heart of a sailor and puzzled an uninitiated female to describe.

Over the mantelpiece was a huge painting of a straw-colored and pink man-of-war, on a blue-green sea, blazing away at a terrified-looking little cutter, on whose deck could be seen a gentleman and a lady, both considerably taller than the mainmast. This work of art was the pride and glory of the admiral, and was displayed to every stranger who visited the White Squall as something that might make even the great old masters look to their laurels.

Deer-antlers bristled in various corners, and five or six huge cages, filled with owls, parrots, hawks, and a dozen other strange birds, hung from the ceiling, while the model of a ship, some three feet long, with all her sails set, her cargo and crew most probably under the hatches—for none were visible on deck—apparently all ready for sea, stood on the mantelpiece, right under the painting.

A huge, wide fireplace, in which, despite the warmth of the evening, a bright fire was burning, occupied one corner of the apartment, and close beside this sat Admiral Havenful, in his elbow-chair, still staring at his niece.

The admiral was a man of fifty or so, short, stout, plethoric, with a rubicund face, a jolly sailor's swagger, and a simple, good-natured look, naturally, that made every heart warm toward him. Very rich, very generous, and very easily "taken in," he was the guardian angel of all the poor in the neighborhood. The admiral had never married, and had only quitted the service a few years before to settle down and end his days in the pride of his heart, his huge, white, eye-blinding "White Squall." A fondness for whisky-punch, children, and nautical phrases, were the most noticeable traits in the old man's character. His niece, Pet Lawless, had never ceased to astonish him, from the first moment he saw her, and now he sat hopelessly gazing at her, and trying to make out what could have brought her there at that hour of the night, looking so pale and excited.

Pet, with her dark eyes fixed on the floor, was uneasily wondering whether she had killed the man she had shot at, and shuddering to think what a dreadful thing it was to shed blood, even in self-defense.

"Oh, I hope—I do hope I haven't killed him!" she exclaimed at last, involuntarily, aloud.

"Killed who? Firefly?" inquired the astounded admiral.

"Uncle Harry," said Pet, looking abruptly up. "I've gone and killed a man!"

This startling announcement so completely overwhelmed the worthy admiral, that he could only give vent to his feelings by a stifled "Stand from under!"

"Yes, I just have; and I expect they'll hang me for it, now. Ranty said I was to be hung, but who would think he could really tell fortunes?"

Killed a man! St. Judas Iscariot!" ejaculated the dismayed admiral. "When, Filbert-tigibbet?"

To-night, not fifteen minutes ago. I expect he's as dead as a herring by this time," said Pet, planting her elbow on her knees, dropping her chin in her hands, and gazing moodily into the fire.

Admiral Havenful glanced appealingly at the candlestick; but as that offered no clue to the mystery, he took off his hat, scratched his head (or, rather, his wig; for he wore one), and then clapped it on again, and turned briskly to his niece.

"Now, little hurricane! just shake out another reef or so—will you? I'm out of my latitude altogether."

"Well, I guess you'd have been more out of it, if you had been caught as I was to-night," said Pet, with a sort of gloomy stoicism. "I was coming through the woods, you know, between Dismal Hollow and the Barrens, when, all of a sudden, two great, big, black niggers jumped from behind the trees, and caught hold of my horse."

With something like a snort of terror and dismay, the admiral sprang to his feet, and brandished the candlestick fiercely over his head, while waiting for what was to come.

"Body of Paul Jones! And what did you do, whiffling?"

"Why, I told them to let go, and they wouldn't; and then I took a pistol, and shot one of them!" exclaimed Pet, with flashing eyes.

"Hoarah!" shouted the admiral, waving the candlestick delightedly above his head. "I knew there was some of the Havenful blood in you! Three cheers for Filbert-tigibbet!"

"Then my horse started, and ran off, and I came right straight here," concluded Pet, her cheeks and eyes lighting up at the exciting recollection.

"Hoarah for little Bombshell!" roared the admiral, as he sprang forward, and catching Pet's hand, gave it a squeeze that nearly crushed the little digits. "You ought to have been a boy, Firefly! By Saint Christopher Columbus! you are a female hero, Pet!"

"Well, but it isn't nice to kill a man, or even a nigger! I hope he ain't dead," said Pet, uneasily.

"Never you mind the monkey! Served him right if he is! I do hope he's gone to 'Davy's locker,' where he'll get a warmer welcome. Why, he would have killed you, Pet?"

"I expect he would; though I don't see where would be the good of killing a little thing like me," said Pet, thoughtfully humane. "I say, uncle, I'd like to go and see if he's dead!"

"And may I be swung to the yard-arm if I let you go a step! Does the girl want to get killed again?" said the admiral, puffing up and down the room, with his hands stuck in his pockets, like a stranded porpoise.

"No; the girl doesn't want to get killed," said Pet, crossly. "I'm not going to be killed so easily, thank you! But it seems to me you might mount two or three of the servants, and let them come with me; and I will call for Ray Germaine; and we'll all go together to the woods, and, maybe, catch those runaway niggers that are frightening the lives out of people. I shot one of 'em, I know; and we can track him by his bleeding. There's a reward offered, too, for whoever takes them up; and who knows but I may get it?"

"Set fire to the reward! That's a good notion, though, about going in search of them when they're wounded, Pet. Oh, you're a jewel, Filbert-tigibbet, and no mistake about it! There ought to be a song made about you. I'll go, too; and there's no time to lose. Pipe all hands, Firefly, while I go and look for my boots."

"Now, why couldn't he say 'Call the servants,' as well as 'Pipe all hands' which hasn't a sensible sound at all," said Pet, as she arose to obey. "Here, you! Jake, Tom, Bob!" she added, opening the door, and shouting at the top of her lungs, "come here as fast as you can. There's murder in the camp!"

"Tumble up!" roared the admiral, from within.

"Tumble up!" repeated Pet, imitating the old sailor's gruff roar as well as she could.

"Uncle says so."

Jake, and Tom, and Bob, most probably thinking, from the uproar, the house was on fire, "tumbled up" accordingly, precipitating themselves over one another, in their eagerness to be first on the field of battle.

"Clear out, and saddle four horses, and arm yourselves with boarding-pikes and cutlasses!" commanded the admiral, fastening a rusty sword to his side, and sticking a couple of pistols in his belt. "And then mount, and ride round to the front door, and stand by for further orders. Oh, the blamed black villain! He deserves to walk the plank, if ever any one did!"

All this time, the admiral had been going panting and puffing round, like a whale, arm-ing himself with every conceivable weapon he could lay hands on, and vociferating, alternately, to himself, to "sprave to" and "stand from under!"

Pet had run out, and sprung upon Starlight; while the three alarmed servants rode behind her. And in a few moments the admiral made his appearance, and got astride a solemn, misanthropic-looking old roan, with many grimaces and contortions; for the admiral did not believe in riding himself, and would sooner have faced a tornado, any day, on the broad Atlantic, than ride three yards on horseback.

The night was still intensely dark, but perfectly calm, and by the command of Petronilla, the men had provided dark lanterns. All were now ready; but the admiral, like most general leaders, had no speech to make, considered it his duty to make a speech. Short, concise speeches on the eve of a battle, say, I believe, most efficacious, and, acting on this conviction, Admiral Havenful's was brief, pithy and to the point, beginning with an adjuration to his horse:

"Sho, Ringbone, sho! Steady's the word, and steady it is! You are now going to fight the battles of your country, my boys, under the glorious stars and stripes. We ain't got 'em here, but that's no matter. The enemy's before you; give 'em a raking broadside first, and then board 'em, sword in hand. The eyes of all the world are upon you now—or would be, only they are sleeping about this time! Clap on all sail; and send before the wind! Hoarah! Go up, Ringbone!"

The effect of this spirited address could not be seen in the dark, and resolved at all hazards to practice what he preached, the admiral gave both heels a simultaneous dig into the ribs of his gloomy-looking steed, which had the effect of setting that ominously-named animal off at a shuffling dog-trot, or, rather, something between a trot

tume was more light than dignified, "you may think this is mighty fine, to come at dead hours of the night, to ax if young mar's in bed, but it's somethin' I wouldn't do, ef I is brack. Bress my soul! It's allers taken care not to be coched in sich wices; but young ladies, now-a-days, as have no 'spect for demselves, can't be 'spected."

"Why, you hateful old thing!" exclaimed Pet, angrily. "I'd like to know what business you have lecturing me! Vices, indeed! I declare! I have a good mind to lay my whip over your shoulders! Is Master Ray in bed? Tell me, or I'll leave you to guess what I'll do to you."

The noise of voices in violent altercation now brought Erminie to the scene of action, looking like an angel in her flowing snowy night-dress. "What is the matter?" she asked in alarm.

"Nothing, only I want Ray. Is he in bed? If he is, wake him up."

"He is not home," He and Ranty went away somewhere, after tea, and haven't come back. We thought they had gone to Heath Hill. Oh, Pet! has anything happened to them?" said Erminie, clasping her hands.

"Not as I know of. Like as not they're at Heath Hill. I haven't been there, myself, since early this morning. Now, don't get frightened and be a goose, Minnie! I wanted Ray to help me in a splendid piece of—of—mischief, but as he's not in, it's no matter. Good-night, and pleasant dreams. I'm off."

And off she was like a shot, slamming the door behind her, after her usual fashion, and just succeeded in springing into her saddle as the slow cavalcade came tramping up.

Slowly as they rode, a short time brought them now to the forest-road. Just as they entered it, a figure came rushing out, shouting: "Help! help! whoever you are, or he'll bleed to death!"

"Why, it's Ranty!" exclaimed Pet, in amazement, as she recognized the voice. "At the same moment, one of the men, lifting his lantern, let its rays stream upon the newcomer, and all started to behold a black, shining, ebony face."

"It's a nigger!" howled the admiral. "Blow him out of the water, boys!"

"It's not a nigger!" shouted the voice of Ranty. "If this soot was off, I'd be as white as you, if not considerably whiter. Come along, he'll die soon, if he's not dead already—poor fellow!"

"Who'll die? Who are you talking about? Oh, Ranty, who is it?" exclaimed Pet, growing faint and sick with sudden apprehension.

"Why, Ray, Germaine, to be sure! You'll have something to brag of, Pet, Lawless, after going and shooting Ray Germaine—won't you, now? I always knew your lugging pistols round, like a female Blackbeard, would come to no good, and now, when you're sentenced to State Prison for life, we'll see how you'll like it. I wish to gracious there wasn't a girl in the world!" vociferated Ranty, with a subdued howl of mingled grief and indignation.

For one dreadful moment, Pet reeled and nearly fell from her saddle. Then, with a long, wild, passionate cry, she leaped from her horse, and sped like an arrow from a bow into the woods.

She had not far to go. By one of the fitful flashes of sheet-lightning that at intervals illumined the dark, she saw a dark, slender, boyish form lying motionless on the dew-drenched grass. The next instant, she was kneeling beside him, holding his head on her breast, and clasping his cold, stiff form in a wild, passionate embrace, as she cried out:

"Oh, Ray! I never meant it! I never, never thought it was you! Oh, Ray! I shall die if you do!"

"Yes, it's all very well to take on and make a fuss now," said Ranty, savagely, giving her a pull away; "but if you kneel hugging him there, and keep 'never, never' till doom's day, it won't bring him to. Get out of this, and if you want to do any good, jump on Starlight and ride off as if Satan was after you (as he always is, I do believe), to Jeddustown, for a surgeon."

"Oh, Ranty! do you think he will die?" exclaimed Pet, in a tone of such piercing anguish, that it thrilled through every heart; but the angry one of Ranty, who considered she deserved to be punished for what she had done.

"Of course he'll die," said Ranty, jerking her away. "If he's not dead already—as I expect he is! Go for the surgeon—will you? They'll want him for the coroner's inquest, which must sit on the body to-morrow morning. And after you've sent the doctor to the cottage, the best thing you can do is to go and give yourself up to the sheriff and save him the trouble of coming to the house after you. Be off, now, and ride fast, if you ever want to atone for the mischief you have done. If you break your neck on the way it will be the greatest blessing bestowed on America since the Declaration of Independence was signed. Here, you fellows! off and get some branches, and spread your coats on them, and make a litter to carry poor Ray home."

"Go for the doctor, Pet," whispered the admiral. "I've got out of my reckoning again, somehow. Don't see where the wind sits, for my part."

Without a word, Pet leaped into her saddle and darted off, according to Ranty's directions, as if "Satan was after her." And then, superintended by Ranty, a rude litter was made and the cold, rigid form of Ray placed upon it. The negroes carefully raised it on their shoulders, and headed by Ranty and the admiral, the melancholy cavalcade set out for the cottage.

"How, in the name of Beelzebub, did this all happen?" was the worthy admiral's first question, as he rode along beside his afflicted nephew.

"It's my opinion Beelzebub, or some other of them old fellows, has had a hand in it, all through!" said Ranty, with another suppressed howl of grief. "The way of it, you see, Uncle Harry, was this: Pet would go to Dismal Hollow this morning in spite of all we could say or do. We told her there were savage negroes in the woods who would send her to kingdom come as fast as they would look at her; but it was only a heaving away of breath and eloquence to talk to her. Go she would and go she did. Well, I persuaded Ray to play a practical joke on her by blacking our faces and wlaying her on her road home, to see whether or not she was as courageous as she pretended to be. Ray consented, and we stopped her here, and by George! before we knew what we were about she fired at Ray, and then dashed off before you could say 'Jack Robinson.' Ray fell like a stone, and I, with a yell like an Indian war-whoop, rushed up to him, and raised him up, and asked him if he was killed. He said 'no' but that he thought he was pretty badly wounded in the shoulder, and I could feel his coat all wet with blood. If I had been a grown-up man, the way I would have sworn at Pet, just then, would have been a caution; but as I wasn't, I contented myself with wishing I had a hold of her for about five minutes—that was all. A little

later, Ray went and fainted as dead as a mackerel, and there we were, left like the two 'Babes in the Wood,' and I expect, like those unfortunate infants, the robins might have made us a grave, if you hadn't come along in the nick of time to my relief. I didn't like to leave poor Ray wounded, and helpless, and alone there, and I couldn't carry him home; so I was in just the tallest sort of a fix I ever want to be in again. So there's the whole story, preface, marginal notes, dedication and all."

"Keep her round a point or so," said the admiral, thoughtfully. "I see breakers ahead!"

"Where?" asked Ranty, looking involuntarily in the direction of the sea.

"If old Mother Ketura finds out Firefly has shot her boy, there'll be mutiny among the crew," said the admiral, in a mysterious whisper. "Don't tell her."

"What will I say, then?" said Ranty. "suppose I tell her he and I were fighting a duel in a peaceable, friendly sort of way, just to keep our hands in, eh?"

"No, no, Ranty, boy! Stick to the truth; every lie you tell is recorded in the great log-book up above," here the admiral removed his glazed hat reverentially. "Say he was shot accidentally."

"On purpose," interrupted Ranty. "Or say he was shot by mistake—so he was, you know."

"All right! I'll fix it up; trust me to get up a work of fiction founded on fact, at a moment's notice! Here we are at the cottage. Now for it!"

Ranty knocked, and again the window up above was raised; and the same black head, a second time aroused from its slumbers, was protruded, and in sharp, irritated tones demanded:

"Who's dar now, I'd like ter know?"

"A mighty polite beginning," muttered Ranty—then raising his voice—"It's me, Lucy—Ranty Lawless."

"Ugh! might have known it was a Lawless! Never seed such a rampagous set—comin' and rousin' people out der beds dis hour de night. Fust de sister, den de brudder; fust de 'un, den de udder," scolded Lucy, quite unconscious she was making poetry; "what in de name of Marster does yer want?"

"To get in, you sooty goblin!" shouted Master Ranty, in a rage. "Come down and open the door, and let us in; don't stand there asking questions."

"Belay your jawing tackle!" roared the admiral, in a voice like distant thunder.

"Deed, I won't den! Does yer tink I's no sort of 'steem for myself to let 'leffin' in mien dis hour de night? I hasn't lived forty odd years to come to dis in my old ages of life."

And down the window went with a bang. Before Ranty could burst out with a speech more vigorous than proper, the door was softly opened, and Erminie, like a stray seraph in her white floating dress, stood before them, with a face pale with undefined apprehension, and exclaiming, with clasped hands:

"Oh, Ranty, something has happened! what is it? I could not go asleep after Pet left, and I felt sure something was going to happen. Where's Ray?"

"Hush, Erminie, don't be frightened. Go in and get a light, and don't wake your grandmother—go."

"But tell me first what has happened. I won't scream. I'll be very good," pleaded Erminie, her face growing whiter and whiter.

"Well, then—Ray's got hurt pretty badly, and Pet's gone for the doctor. Now don't go crying, or making a time, but light a candle, and kindle a fire, and get some linen bandages and things 'ere. Always wanted when wounds are dressed. That's a good girl!—worth your weight in gold, not to speak of diamonds. Hurry up!"

Pale and trembling, but soon wonderfully quiet, Erminie obeyed, but started back with a faint cry of terror, when the light fell on the black faces of the boys.

"Hush, Erminie! give me some soap and water 'till I wash all this black off before the doctor comes," said Ranty. "I dare say, I ain't very pretty to look at just now; but never mind; a good scrubbing will set it all right. And now get some more, and wash the black off Ray's face, too; I fancy you'll find him white enough underneath by this time."

Still trembling, and with a face perfectly colorless, Erminie obeyed; and while Ranty was giving his frontispiece a vigorous scrubbing, Erminie was more gently bathing that of Ray. When the dusky paint was off, the deadly pallor of his face seemed in such striking contrast, that she barely repressed a cry of passionate grief. Cold, and still, and white as death, like one already dead. Then Ranty, with a face shining from the combined influences of sincere grief, and a severe application of soap and water, went to the door to see, like Sister Annie in "Bluebeard," if there was "anybody coming." Very soon he returned with the welcome intelligence that he heard the tramp of approaching horses; and the next moment, Pet burst wildly into the room, followed by a grave, old, bald-headed gentleman—the physician of Jeddustown.

"Oh, doctor, will he die?" passionately exclaimed Pet, looking up, with a face as white as Raymond's own.

"Hope not; can't tell just yet," said the doctor, as he proceeded to rip up Ray's coat-sleeve, and remove the saturated coat.

The wound was in the shoulder; and the doctor, with very little difficulty, extracted the bullet, dressed the wound, and proceeded to administer restoratives. Then seeing Pet's white, terrified face, and with black eyes looking at him so beseechingly, he chuckled her good-naturedly under the chin, and said:

"Don't be afraid, little blackbird! Master Ray's good as half-a-dozen dead people yet. All you have got to do is, to nurse him carefully for a couple of weeks, and you'll see him alive and kicking as briskly as ever by the end of that time."

"Oh, I'm so glad," said Pet, drawing a long, deep breath; and dropping into a chair, she covered her face with her hands.

The doctor now gave a few directions to Erminie, and then took his leave. The admiral followed him to the door, and whispered:

"Doctor, will you just stand off and on around here, till the lad in there gets seaworthy again? I'll stand the damages, and don't you say anything about it."

The doctor nodded, and rode off; and then the admiral, seeing he could be of no use in the cottage, mounted, with many groans and grunts, Ringbone, and wended his way, followed by his three valorous henchmen, to the White Squall.

"Ranty, go home," said Pet; "we don't want you. You can tell papa, if he asks you, how it all happened, and say I ain't coming home until to-morrow. As I've shot Ray, I'm going to stay here and nurse him; so be off!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 290.)

The Deer-Hunt.

BY ELI AARON.

In the Southwest the mode of hunting deer preferred, as affording the most sport, is by driving. Though no doubt familiar to many of my readers, a short detail of the *modus operandi* may not be unacceptable to the uninitiated.

Deer almost invariably pass from cover at or near the same points which their dams have crossed for years. These spots are called stands, and vary in distance from a few hundred yards to a half a mile or more from each other. They are guarded by the sportsmen, who, dismounting from their horses, conceal them in the woods, in the opposite direction from whence the game is expected, and, taking their stations on foot, await in silence the approach of the game, which the huntsman, who has gone off in an opposite direction with the dogs, drives toward them.

A person on a stand is not only required to keep wide awake, but to continue stationary. Though rifles are used by some experts, the gun almost exclusively used is a double-barreled shot-gun, of a caliber sufficiently large to chamber three buck-shot, as the hunter is obliged in almost every case to shoot at a running object, and generally through bushes or vines. Deer are sometimes killed at up ward of a hundred yards, though they are much oftener shot at from forty to sixty yards.

Should a deer pass the line of stands unhurt, or only be wounded, the hunter mounts his horse and endeavors to reach some distant stand in advance of the deer, to do which it is usually necessary to ride at a break-neck pace through the woods.

It was one of those delightful mornings in the fall peculiar to the semi-tropical climate of the Gulf States, where lingering flowers perfume the air after it has become cool and bracing, and we have to be reminded that the summer is gone before we are conscious that the winter is approaching.

It was yet an hour to daylight; the moon had sunk behind the western horizon, and the stars twinkled dimly through the fleecy clouds, precursors of the coming dawn which swept across the heavens. The town of Jackson was buried in slumbers; there was no sign of life—no living thing was seen to move. The silence was unbroken, save when the fitful night-wind wafted to the ear the melancholy murmur of Pearl river, as it glided, swift and dark, along its tortuous course.

Presently there was a sound of voices and horses' hoofs, and a group of five mounted sportsmen in hunting-dresses, accompanied by two colored servants, and followed by some twenty hounds, approached the ferry, which consisted of a wide, flat-bottomed boat, that was paddled to and fro across the river by a cable stretched from bank to bank.

A shrill whoop and the echoing blast of a horn, at whose sound the hounds bayed deep and loud, brought forth the sleepy ferryman, whose grumblings were cut short by the judicious application of a flask of brandy to his lips. The party embarked with their horses and dogs; the boat, urged by strong arms, glided swiftly across the river, and the hunters clattered away along a winding road through the forest.

A brisk ride of an hour brought them to the hunting grounds. Russ H—, who was familiar with every foot of the woods, placed the different hunters on the stands, and, taking a position himself, warned Pete, a wiry African, who had been in at the death of many a deer, that all was ready, and he calling to his dogs in a cheery voice, dashed on his shaggy pony into the bushes.

About a quarter of an hour passed, and then the faint whimpering cry of a hound was heard; then another and another took up the cry, but feebly, as if in doubt; they were trailing on a "cold scent." Then came the cry of a deep-mouthed hound. "Hark! there goes old Rock, and he never lies." There was a perfect burst of sound as the whole pack gave tongue.

On came the dogs in full cry. Every hunter was on the alert, while their nerves tingled with the almost sickening sensation of wild excitement. Ere long there was a sound of cracking twigs, and a fine doe dashed out within sixty yards of Tom S—. Quick as lightning he leveled his gun; there was a flash and report, and the beautiful animal bit the dust.

Tom hastened with his hunting-knife to bleed the fallen victim, and with his horn summoned the other hunters, and after looking at the deer, dispersed to their stands, while Pete, followed by the hounds, took a wide circuit, and again commenced "the drive."

The dogs soon gave tongue, and a three year old buck and a doe came out by Russ H—'s stand. The buck fell dead to his first barrel, and the doe, severely wounded by his second, was run into and pulled down by the dogs.

The party now moved to a different part of the woods, and as soon as they had taken their stands the dogs were put in, and in a few minutes started four deer. A doe and a fawn ran out close to Ned F—, and were killed by him at a single shot. A fine buck which was following close behind them, alarmed by the report of the gun, turned abruptly to the left, and, after nearly running over Ware, was shot by that astonished sportsman, the charge taking effect in the buck's legs, two of which being broken, it was brought to a stand-still, and Ware walked up to and dispatched it with his other barrel.

A doe which, as it happened, was the only one of the deer followed by the dogs, darted through the bushes near Tom S., who fired at it with both barrels, but missed, and it made for Steen's Creek, across which it swam and escaped. By hard riding Pete was fortunate enough to head the dogs, and whip them off of the trail, for if they had followed the deer into the dense woods below the creek, the day's sport would have been at an end.

The party now assembled, and adjourning to Moss Spring, which was near at hand, did ample justice to a meal of cold food, cracked jokes, related hunting exploits, and fed the dogs.

Aaron L., who was usually the most successful of hunters, had, by that ill-luck which sometimes is the fate of the most skillful, failed to get a single shot during the morning, and in consequence his comrades, who were all flushed with success, offered him any amount of mock condolences, all of which he received with imperturbable good humor; and retorted by advising his sham comforters, in the words of the old saw, "Not to halloo before they were out of the woods."

Everybody being refreshed, and the hounds rested, it was determined to drive the Collins tract, a densely-timbered part of the woods, which was famous for being the favorite resort of an immense buck, whose great size, and cunning, had long furnished a favorite theme for hunting stories. In half an hour

every man was at his post, and Pete started in with the dogs.

"Hold your guns straight, boys," said Russ H., as he stationed them; "the deer about here always strike a bee-line for the Pelehatchie river, and once across that, you may say good-bye to them."

Aaron L. was at the Dogwood stand. Concealing his thoroughbred black horse Cossack in a clump of sumac near by, he seated himself on a stump, with his double-barreled rifle across his knees, his thumb resting on the cock, listening intently to catch the faintest sound.

The dogs soon opened on the scent; first was heard the sharp, eager cry of Lightfoot, and what a crash followed! Twenty hounds at once let fly their music, deluging the woods with a perfect tempest of sound.

Aaron crouched like a panther behind a bush; his heart beat fast with excitement, and he burned to wipe out his morning's failure, but his head was cool, and his hand steady as a rock. Cossack, who had been trained to the sport, and took a lively interest in it, with his ears thrown back, and his eyes, bulging out of his head with eagerness, stood like a statue carved in ebony.

The cry thickened as it swept nearer and nearer; there was a crashing of boughs, and a noble buck with wide-spreading antlers burst from the covert about seventy yards distant from Aaron. Quick as thought, the rifle was at his shoulder, his finger feeling the trigger with a pressure so gradual that the barrel seemed to pour forth its contents spontaneously, at the instant it rested motionless; the ball struck the side of a small sapling in its course, and glanced aside from the object at which it was aimed, and while he was in mid-air, the second barrel was discharged, and he fell headlong with a tremendous crash in the bushes; but he was only wounded, and quickly regained his feet and continued his flight with unabated speed.

It was but the work of a moment for Aaron L. to run to Cossack, tear loose his hitch-rein, and throw himself in the saddle, and instantly the well-trained horse darted off in pursuit of the flying deer.

The buck was heading straight for the Pelehatchie river, and Aaron, throwing himself almost at length on his willing horse, and guided by the cries of the dogs, rushed after him at full speed, through brake and tangled wood, where even at a foot-pace a horseman would have found some difficulty in picking his way.

Away Aaron dashed like a falcon darting on his prey—leaping rugged masses of fallen timber, or holes and fissures, so concealed by grass and bushes that he frequently did not see them until his horse was flying over them—now driving through thickets where the foliage was so dense and interlaced that he could not see his horse's length in front of him—now with head bowed low, and his arms claspings Cossack's neck, crashing like a bolt from a catapult through masses of vines which hung across his course, heedless of the fact that, if he encountered a vine too stout to break he would be hurled out of his saddle like a stone from a sling. After encountering perils at which any one but a hunter, with his blood at boiling point, would have stood aghast, he emerged into the pine-barrens where the woods were comparatively free from undergrowth.

The deer was now in sight, and close upon his flying tracks came the eager pack, who, excited to frenzy by the scent of blood and the sight of the deer, with their pipes pitched at the very top of their gamut, went screaming after him in frantic chase.

But the Pelehatchie river, with its swift, muddy current, thick with snags, was near at hand, and the sight of the dense cover beyond it, in which he had often found refuge, seemed to infuse new vigor in the panting buck; he redoubled his speed, leaped into the stream, and swam stoutly over, pursued by the staunch dogs, who pressed him so closely that they brought him to bay on the other shore.

The bank was some ten feet high, and along the margin of the water was a jagged *chavara de frize* of drift-wood, roots, and limbs of fallen trees; but Aaron's blood was up, and he never drew rein. Cossack was naturally fearless, and knowing from experience that it was vain for him to refuse anything at which he was put, gathered his hind legs well under him, quickened his stroke as he approached the bank, and with a flying leap cleared the obstacles in beautiful style, and plunged into the river.

Aaron, slipping himself out of the saddle to relieve his horse, held on by his mane, cheered him by his voice, directed his course, and when he struck bottom, mounted again; but the mud was so deep and tenacious at the edge of the water that Cossack sunk in it to the saddle-girth, and finding his struggles availing, remained motionless. Aaron stood up on his back, and using it as a spring-board, leaped as far as he could, and landed in mud nearly up to his knees, through which he struggled to the firm ground.

The buck was fighting savagely with the dogs, two of which he had disarmed with his horns and the sharp hoofs of his fore feet. Seeing Aaron approach, he freed himself from the hounds by one tremendous struggle, and plunged madly toward him. With hair erect and bristling with rage, his mouth dripping with bloody foam, and his eyes gleaming savagely, the furious beast charged with lowered head. On he came, at headlong speed. Throwing his useless rifle aside, Aaron, with his bare hunting knife in hand, coolly awaited the onset, until the sharp horns were within a foot of his breast; then he leaped nimbly aside, and as the buck passed in his mad career, drove the knife to the hilt in his side. The beast reeled, staggered, made one faltering leap toward the woods, and fell dead. Hurrah! hurrah! Aaron's clothes were torn; there were contusions on his person, and he was muddy and tired, but he had laid low the monarch of the swamp—the Big Buck of the Pelehatchie—the prize for which the most redoubtable hunters had striven in vain, is his, and slain right gallantly, too.

Aaron now turned his attention to his horse and the dogs. Cossack, relieved of the weight of his rider, had struggled out of the mud, and was cropping the grass near at hand. One of the dogs was past caring for; another had a deep gash cut in his shoulder, but did very well after the blood was staunched, and the others had escaped with a few insignificant hurts.

The proud notes of Aaron's horn, and the baying of the hounds, soon called together the other hunters. Aaron tied the buck to Cossack's tail, and towed him across the river, received the congratulations of his friends, and the party returned to Jackson, receiving, as they passed through the streets, quite an ovation, as each of the huntsmen, and the two servants, had a deer strapped behind him, on his horse.

It is but one step from companionship to slavery, when one associates with vice.

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OWED TO MY POCKET-BOOK.

BY JOE JOT, JR.

How fair thou art, oh, little book,
Of scented Russia leather!
With stitches fanciful and fine
To hold you well together.
But, stitches strong are useless all;
There is no strain upon thee;
The great brogan of poverty
Is very heavy on thee.

What endless room is here for bills
Of large denominations,
With checks and bonds a goodly store—
Ah, vain imaginations!
The hungriest pocket-book thou art
That ever in a highway
Was picked up by a well-tooled man,
And cast into a by-way.

Consumption settled on thy form
Till thou couldst grow thinner,
In vain you plead with open mouth
Of me a greenback dinner.
'Tis very sad thou couldst not stand
The drain upon thy system;
I never knew what dollars were
Until I wholly missed 'em.

I'm sure to say that there's more cash
Outside of thee than in thee,
I'd stake thee on some risky bet
Nor care much who would win in thee.
I look at thee and nothing see—
They say you can't see nothing,
Yet here it's very palpable—
In sooth—not very soothing.

Should some highwayman thee demand,
I'd gladly give thee to him,
'Twould lead him into suicide
Or monstrously undo him.
Sad pocket-book! I feel for thee,
But not as in days sunny;
Henceforth the pocket of my vest
Will carry all my money.

Jessie's Test.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

MISS JERUSA JENKINSON folded her napkin with slow, precise carefulness, and then followed her pretty little hostess from the dining-room back to the parlor, where the soft astral lamp glowed like a silver moon, and the illuminated store made red shadows on the brown rep easy-chair in which Miss Jenkinson ensconced herself.

"I really don't know what to do about it, Miss Jerusha. If I once thought Rich was guilty of such indiscretions as you declare he is, I do believe I should—die!"

Jessie Wintringham winked away a suspicious brightness from her pretty curling brown lashes, and looked eagerly at her guest's sarcastic countenance.

"I dare say there are a great many people who would say I was very officious, my dear, because I tell you what I think of that good-looking husband of yours. But I feel I have your interest at heart; and if no one else has the courage and charity to point out to a young wife of half a year the goings-on of her husband—why, my dear Mrs. Wintringham, I'll stand by you, and take your part."

Her solemn words made little shivers of vague terror thrill all over Jessie.

"I dare say you are very kind indeed, Miss Jerusha, only I can't believe that Rich is such a flirt as you say—always paying such exclusive attention to ladies when he is away from home."

"You must think just what you please, my dear. Only, I suppose if you were to see for yourself, you would believe the evidence of your own eyes."

Jessie's slightly-flushed cheeks betrayed the painful interest she felt.

"Of course, if I were to see—"

Miss Jerusha arose triumphantly.

"Then all you have to do is to take my advice, and the next time Mr. Wintringham has such very important business to New York, do you go by the same train, with your waterproof and a thick veil to disguise you. I must go now, I think, my dear. I'll have to stop at poor Mrs. Delacorn's, and hear if she has heard from that runaway daughter of hers. Thanks for the early cup of tea you made so nicely—and don't forget what I told you, Mrs. Wintringham."

And the abominable old gossip went her way, leaving the arrows of the distrust she had sown rankling painfully in poor, loving, jealous Jessie's heart.

She perfectly adored her handsome young husband; and as always such passionate affection is accompanied by jealousy, this otherwise sensible little woman found it no difficult matter to entertain the doubts her guest expressed.

Rich was so handsome, so stylish, so gallant—why should not ladies enjoy his attentions? And, sitting by the cozy fire, waiting until her husband should come in for his dinner, Jessie almost decided to play the spy upon him at the earliest moment.

Then, when she heard his latch-key in the door, and his quick, firm tread in the hall, and saw his handsome, cheerful face as he took her cheeks in his hands to kiss her, she felt ashamed and confused.

"I am afraid I shall have to hurry you, dear," he said, linking her arm through his, and leading the way to the dining-room, where the bright lights made a genial glow on silver, crystal, and snow-white china.

"Hurry me—Rich, how?"

"I have to take the seven-thirty train, very unexpectedly, for the city, on important business that cannot be delayed. I shall be home to-morrow night, I expect. Jessie, will you have another piece of the black meat?"

Mrs. Wintringham toyed with her chicken, her appetite entirely destroyed by the news Rich announced.

"On important business." Yes, that was what Miss Jenkinson had said. And the night train, too! It flashed hotly across Jessie's mind that her husband was going down to the theater, and, if what Miss Jerusha had said was true—not alone!

That second decided her; and as Mr. Wintringham arose from the dining-table, he little knew the thoughts that were thronging in his pretty little wife's head.

"Don't be lonesome, darling, will you? Or shall I stop and tell Florrie to come up to-night?"

Jessie laughed—a little forcedly.

"You over-anxious fellow! What do I want of sister Florrie? I shall not be lonely at all."

"Brave little woman; kiss me good night, then, dear!"

He was so kind and thoughtful, and Jessie's fond, foolish heart almost misgave her as she watched him off.

"It is downright wicked to distrust him! but then it is just these elegant, fascinating men who are so agreeable to other women besides their wives—at least, Miss Jerusha says so, and she's old enough to know!"

She watched the ivory hands of the cuckoo clock hastening toward seven-thirty.

"Well—I shall do it—this once, any how."

And she went up to her room, with sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks.

"Is this seat engaged, sir?"

It was a low, sweet voice that addressed Mr.

Richmond Wintringham, as the seven-thirty train steamed on after calling at the last station before reaching the Jersey City terminus.

Mr. Wintringham arose courteously, glancing at the small, graceful figure in a navy-blue waterproof and double veil.

"Take the seat by the window, madam." She glided in, and Mr. Wintringham sat down beside her, all unconscious of the side-long glance from a pair of eager eyes under the veil.

"How handsome he is, and he hasn't the least idea who I am!"

For of course it was Jessie who had taken the train at the same station with Rich, but had waited until the last station had been reached before she changed her seat in the car, for the one she now occupied.

"I wonder if he does know me? Of course he doesn't, only he don't seem very eager to say anything to me." Then a little fragrantly-perfumed handkerchief fluttered accidentally to the floor.

Jessie made a deceitful little dive after it, displaying her daintily kidded hand, and round, neatly cuffed wrist.

Rich quickly anticipated her, and handed the handkerchief quietly to her.

"Allow me, madam."

"Oh, thank you! I am sorry to trouble you so much. I was very awkward."

Jessie's cheeks were blushing furiously under her double dark brown veil.

"I will give him a chance any how," she thought.

But, Mr. Wintringham only bowed gravely, and maintained a courteous silence.

The train slowed up, and Jessie, with persistent determination to draw him into conversation, made a feint of alarm that amused herself as she peered out of the window, then at her seat mate.

"What are we stopping for? This isn't a station—oh! is anything the matter?" Rich smiled—this little woman was such an odd one.

"There is no need of apprehension, madam. We are entering the tunnel."

"The tunnel? Oh, dear, the tunnel!"

But, Rich didn't "take" at all. He only settled cozily back and slouched his seal-skin hat on his forehead, leaving his companion to fight the imaginary terrors of the tunnel as best she might.

The train had come to its final standstill at the depot, and just as Wintringham arose to leave the car, he felt the timid touch of fingers on his coat-sleeve.

"Please pardon me—but—there is a ferryboat to cross in—about there! and if you would be so kind as to tell me which way it is to the St. Julian hotel?"

Rich buttoned up his overcoat deliberately while she spoke.

"The 'St. Julian'?" I am going there myself, madam. If you are unaccompanied I will see you there. This way, please."

At last! Jessie's cheeks were as hot as fire now, and her eyes bright as stars as she walked through the long depot and ferry-house beside her husband. In the ladies' cabin Rich gave her a seat, then left her to join a group of gentlemen who were conversing near the door, and at the New York coach he escorted her to a St. Julian transfer coach, much as if she had been a child in his charge, whom he was bound to do his duty by, and yet considered somewhat of a nuisance.

As it happened the coach had other passengers, so that the hot color had time to die from out Jessie's face, although she mentally regarded him "a darling, provoking fellow!"

"If you please, sir, an answer is wanted."

One of the waiters at the St. Julian handed a tiny notelet to Mr. Rich Wintringham just after that gentleman had inspected the arrangements of his room and was settled down for a half-hour's examination of sundry papers in his memorandum book.

"An answer!—a letter for me—oh, yes, from Ned Hathaway, about the shares—"

His eyes opened widely as he carefully tore it open, to find, not a business communication from Ned Hathaway, but a dainty little note, in a graceful, flowing hand.

"To the gentleman in the seal-skin cap."

"You have made me desire very much to see you again. Is there not time to attend the theater?"

"YOUR LADY ADMIRER."

Rich drew a long breath of surprise.

"So that's the little game, is it?" Then he rapidly wrote an answer and dispatched it by the man, who grinned knowingly as he received a twenty-five cent stamp from Jessie's trembling fingers.

"Now, then, I've caught him this time. Suppose he consents—"

The ebbing color on her cheeks, the quivering of her pretty mouth, was ample evidence of the state of her feelings; and she opened the sealed envelope as one does a telegram—trying to assure one's self nothing is amiss, and yet feeling it necessary to be prepared for the worst.

Permit 'the gentleman in the seal-skin cap' to offer a word of counsel to the 'lady admirer'—that, in future, she learn to distinguish between a gentleman and a scamp; and, when she returns home, which had better be at once, she confess her imprudence to her mother."

Jessie gave a little cry of delight.

"Rich, my own true Rich."

The dinner-table was in readiness, and deliciously suggestive odors of turtle-soup and egg-plant came from the regions where Jessie Wintringham's incomparable cook reigned supreme; and in the lace and damask draped bay window Mrs. Wintringham waited for her husband's coming home, with her sweet face all sunny welcome, that made him feel what a bonny darling she was as he kissed her before even he removed his seal-skin cap.

"And how have you got along, Jessie? Were you lonely last night?"

She blushed a little as she helped him off with his overcoat.

"No, not at all. Indeed, I've had an unusually fine time."

"That's good. Had any company?"

"Yes. Flo' and her lover were here to lunch this noon. Rich, I think Mr. Addison is just perfectly splendid."

He frowned in pretended horror.

"You think Flo's beau perfectly splendid? Very well, Mrs. Wintringham, if you wish me to be jealous."

"If that makes you jealous, what will you say when I tell you I have had a letter from a gentleman since you've been gone—a handsome man than even Mr. Addison."

Jessie watched him closely, her eyes beginning to hint of not far distant tears.

"You did? I dare say I can see it?"

He was smiling, very little as a distrustful husband would do.

Jessie slipped a half-sheet of paper from her pocket and gave it to him, her lip trembling, yet half smiling.

He opened it carelessly, then looked at her in amazement.

"Why, what on earth, Jessie! Why, I wrote this letter."

"Yes, I know you did—oh, Rich!"

She was almost crying now, and her husband was looking so gravely at her. She pointed to a navy-blue waterproof and brown veil lying across a chair.

"It was I, Rich! I know it was awfully wicked, but—but I wanted to know if it was true, you know, and—"

Mr. Wintringham knit his brows, frowningly. "I am not sure I understand yet, Jessie, did you send me that letter last night? Were you 'my lady admirer' on the train and at the St. Julian?"

She laid her hands on his shoulder, and looked in his eyes penitently.

"Don't scold, Rich! It was I, and my little escapade has made me very happy, for all I know I was very cruel to do such a thing. You may punish me in any way you please, Rich!"

She said it meekly, but with such love and pride in her eyes that he would have been less than Rich Wintringham to have censured her.

So he drew her head down to his breast and kissed her, while she promised never to be so foolish again.

The Rigoletta's Engineer.

BY CAPTAIN CHARLES HOWARD.

"HETTY, wouldn't you like to go down on the engine to-morrow night?"

The speaker, a good-looking young fellow of nineteen, leaned against one of the monster drive-wheels of the Rigoletta, which stood puffing before Stanton's unpretentious depot.

The girl addressed looked up into his face, with a smile that displayed two rows of pearly teeth.

"You want somebody to bother you," she said. "Why, Jule, all the time I would be in the road, and John would stop the Rigoletta, and leave her in disgust. If you know what is good for yourself, keep away from me!"

He laughed, and said:

"Yes, I know you'll go down with me on the engine. The ride is so exciting, and just think, we will take Governor Knox and his staff down to-morrow night. John will be glad to have an angel on the engine, and you know what Bradley thinks of you."

Hetty McFarland yielded to the entreaties of the young fireman, before the Rigoletta threw smoke rings heavenward, and moved off like a monarch.

The sun was setting behind the hills in the rear of the town, and the girl waited her lover good-by, as she turned toward her home.

Fifty miles south of Stanton, in the city of Hamilton, dwelt Hetty McFarland's uncle, whom the girl had long thought of visiting. Therefore, to carry out her purpose, she promised to go down on the Rigoletta the following night.

She knew that conductor Bradley would not object to her presence on the engine, for he was the politest conductor of the road, and was indebted to her for the many well-chosen bouquets that he wore during the flower season.

Then, as Julius had said, a ride on the engine would be so exciting, and with such good fellows as her lover and John Nixon, the engineer, she anticipated a pleasant time.

When the Rigoletta, oiled and polished till her machinery and mountings glistened like burnished silver and gold, again reached Stanton on her down trip, Hetty McFarland was prepared for her ride.

Julius sprang from the engine, found her in a jiffy, and assisted her to the little apartment which he had fitted up anew for her reception.

"How foggy it is to-night," she said to him. "There is a moon, but it does no good."

"That's so, Hetty. We've got to feel our way. You see, Governor Knox and his staff are aboard, and we have been ordered to be very careful. I spoke to Bradley about you going down with us, and he said, 'Certainly, just as I knew he would.'"

Hetty was sitting on the green-plush cushion that covers the lid of the tool-box of the engine, and her lover, talking, leaned against the jamb of the door.

"Excuse me for one moment, Hetty," he said, and sprang from the engine and disappeared.

He walked about the platform, looking for some person, whom it seemed he could not find.

"I don't like affairs to-night," he said to himself. "He looked as if he had been drinking, and we want a sober man to run the Rigoletta through this terrible fog."

Across the track and almost directly opposite the depot building stood a groggery to which access could be obtained through a garden behind it. This was not the sole avenue of ingress, but it was called the secret way, and sometimes the employees of the road made use of it to procure a sly drink. After a while the young fireman crossed the track and traversed the garden to the groggery.

He did not enter, for beyond the threshold of such a place he had promised a fair young girl that he would never step. He paused at the door, which was open, and looked between the green slats of the shade into the room.

At the counter, with a glass of brandy in his hand, stood the man for whom he had been looking—John Nixon, the engineer.

The fireman's face grew pale when he saw him, and he said something which was connected with Hetty McFarland's name.

He did not move until the engineer emptied the glass and turned to go. Then Julius saw that his face was flushed, and he hardly looked like the same man.

He passed very near the young watcher, whom the fog hid, and a minute later was shaking hands with Hetty on the engine.

For four years John Nixon had, to all appearances, refrained from drinking. Once liquor had cost him a good situation on the road; but his reformation was so strong and praiseworthy, that the company encouraged him by restoring him to the mastery of the Rigoletta.

Until that night no railroad man had seen him lift the glass to his lips, and Julius Baird, after witnessing what he had, did not know what to do.

There were precious lives on the train that trip, and it would require good engineering to carry them through safely. He knew that Nixon would be discharged before the train could leave Stanton if Bradley was informed of his action. In such an event his duties would devolve upon the young fireman, who doubted his ability to perform them satisfactorily. The responsibility was great, and then John Nixon knew every mile of the road and he could not be spared.

After a long mental debate the fireman stepped upon the engine and sat beside Hetty. He talked with her pleasantly, mentioning not his fears, but watched the engineer without ceasing.

The train moved off after its usual halt, and was soon rushing through the dense fog.

The engineer conversed for a few minutes when he became sullen and stood in the door with his back to the lovers.

"What's the matter with John?" asked Hetty, in a whisper.

Her question drew a secret from the young fireman's heart. In a whisper he narrated the scene in the groggery, and told her the engine was under the care of a drunken man.

The fair cheeks grew pale at this, and Hetty's hand dropped upon her lover's arm.

"John, we must take the Rigoletta safely to Hamilton!" she said, with firmness. "Think! Our good governor is on board, and there are women and children in the sleeping cars."

He nodded, and said "Yes, Hetty," without taking his eyes from the engineer.

"We ought to find signals in this fog!" she said, for, from her lover, Hetty had learned much about the iron track.

"If there be danger we will find them," he answered her. "The governor's presence insures extra precautions, and I expect to hear the signals before we reach Hamilton. Why, in this awful fog, which seems like a shroud of triple thickness, we couldn't see a headlight fifty feet before us."

At that moment Nixon turned and looked at the gauge.

Then he threw open the furnace door. "Wood!" he laconically said to the fireman, who looked at Hetty and turned to the tender.

"John, aren't we going fast enough through this fog?" she said to the engineer, in a soft, half pleading tone.

"I'm the engineer of the Rigoletta," he answered her, not harshly, but with a smile. "But the governor is on board."

"He's no better than John Nixon!"

"John, we might collide with another train."

"In which event the Rigoletta would be knocked out of shape. I've run through worse fogs than this," and in a lower voice as he turned away, "I'll run as I please if we burst the boiler!"

Hetty with pallid face saw Julius feed the furnace anew and reset himself at her side.

The speed of the engine increased, and John Nixon, mad with brandy, watched the pointers of the gauge.

"Why don't Bradley ring him down to slower time?" asked Hetty.

"He's having a good time with the governor's party, and then he's got all the confidence in the world in John."

On, still on, through the cold fog that made Hetty wrap her shawl about her shoulders and shiver, even then, went the engine, growing as mad as its drunken master.

Suddenly a strange report that seemed to emanate from beneath the very wheels of the engine fell upon the lovers' ears.

Julius Baird sprang to his feet.

"The fog signal!" he cried, and looked at Nixon.

"What's up young man?" said the engineer, looking at him with wild eyes that would have made some believe that their owner was a maniac. "Sit down there with your doll-faced girl. I'll run the Rigoletta."

"John, didn't you hear the fog signal?" said the fireman.

"No, nor you either. We're all right—"

"There! the second one!" cried Julius, as a report exactly like the first fell upon his ears. "That means stop."

"If you're running this train I want to see your commission of authority!" said the mad engineer.

"I am not running it," replied the youth, quite calmly. "You know the code of the road as well, perhaps better, than I do. You know all about the fog signals. The first means run slower, the second, stop, the third, stop at all hazards—there's danger ahead!"

"What's that you're trying to tell me?" roared Nixon. "Curse your fog signals! You shan't dictate to me because you've got your sweetheart with you to-night. Now keep your mouth shut, or—"

He never finished the threat, but laid his hand on a heavy wrench, and looked daggers at the youth.

The last word had scarcely left the engineer's lips when the third and last fog signal sounded more distinct than the others.

The wheels had crushed the cap on the iron rails; but John Nixon paid no heed to it.

"He's crazed with drink!" said Julius, moving back toward Hetty McFarland, "and he's driving the train right into some terrible accident. The rains may have swept the river bridge away; we must be very near it now."

The minute that followed was one of agony.

At the end thereof, the engineer threw open the furnace door, and turning to his fireman, said:

"Wood! wood! and be quick about it too!"

Julius was leaving the cushion, when Hetty suddenly sprang to her feet, and drew a small revolver from her pocket.

"Stop the train!" she cried, pointing the weapon at John Nixon's head; "you will not obey the fog signals; you must obey me, or die!"

The drunkard dropped the wrench, and stared aghast into Hetty's flashing eyes.

The new situation seemed to be sobering him. "Stop the train!" she repeated, "and stop it at once!"

He put his hand on the lever, and still looking at her, he obeyed the command.

The speed of the train diminished, and it soon stood still on the track.

Then was heard the rushing of mad voices, and the shouts of men.

"I feared it!" cried Julius; "the bridge over the river is gone!"

John Nixon stood erect with his hand on the lever, and almost sober.

"Go and tell Bradley," Hetty said to Julius, who disappeared.

A moment later the conductor, followed by several passengers and men in their shirt-sleeves, appeared at the engine.

"I thank God for such women as you, Hetty," he said. "We are within twenty feet of the bridgeless abutment. An instant more, and we would have been in the foaming torrent."

Hetty McFarland breathed a thankful prayer, and saw John Nixon removed from his post.

The danger was over. A woman's firmness had saved the train and its precious freight.

It seems that a few minutes prior to the explosion of the alarm caps the bridge had been carried away by the